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**Farmers' Markets as assemblage: social
relations, social practice and the
producer/consumer nexus in the north east of
England**

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Keith Spiller

1 1 FEB 2009

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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Abstract

Farmers' markets have recently enjoyed some academic attention and situated within this is a valuable reading of the contexts that surround markets, of particular interest have been the nascent forces that have encouraged the re-emergence of food markets. Prior to the more recent growth in interest towards food production and sourcing, opportunities to engage with alternative means of food sourcing were somewhat limited in a British context. The cultural significance of such reactions are undoubtedly important and while farmers' markets offer a relatively ephemeral window into the economic processes of local economies and of actually buying and selling food, they also offer a distinctive approach in understanding the contexts of such actions. Previous work has considered notions of trust, face-to-face transaction, high quality and social embeddedness. These concepts strengthen what makes the markets both different and unique, as compared to conventional means of shopping; for instance, meeting and talking to the person who actually produces the product on sale is a novel idea in an age of post-industrialization. This thesis examines the act of buying and selling at farmers' markets and the colliding networks, associations, symbolic meanings and understandings often present within these spaces of consumption. Focusing upon the construction of relationships between producers and consumers, the work unpacks the socio-economic impacts and implications generated when farmers' market producers and consumers meet and highlights the social intricacies and subtleties that can be produced within spaces of consumption. The thesis reviews relevant sources and material in relation to farmers' markets, the UK food and the agricultural industry. The research for this thesis was supported with approaches that included in-depth interviews, participant observation and participant surveys and the focus of the thesis rests upon the moments when producers and consumers meet at the markets and the actual physicality of the emotive or affective notions tied up in such a construct. The thesis argues that a more agency-led approach has the potential to expand geographical understandings of social relations and social practice, and explores this with a theoretical emphasis on materiality, affect, performance and ephemerality.

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Declaration

None of the material included in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at the University of Durham.

Statement of copyright

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List of acronyms

AFN	Alternative Food Networks
ANT	Actor Network Theory
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FARMA	National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association
FM	Farmers' Markets
F&M	Foot and Mouth Disease
LETS	Local Exchange Trading Systems
NAFM	National Association of Farmers' Markets
SFSC	Short Food Supply Chains

Chapter 1

Introduction

One feature of food systems in industrialised nations is the power of the middlemen: the food-processing companies and large supermarket chains. Three charges are levelled against these players: they push up pollution by transporting food crazy distances to centralised collections and processing centres; they push down prices, so farmers earn less money for their produce; and they cut consumers off from farmers... But fresh ideas are changing this picture. While countries such as France have a long tradition of farmers selling direct to consumers, in the US, UK and Ireland the idea had to be reinvented 20 years ago. The resulting farmers' markets now bring in hundreds of millions of pounds each year.

(New Scientist 2004)

Farmers' markets are not new; direct sales, agricultural marts and markets have been common in the UK for the past few centuries. However, farmers' markets as they are understood today are a relatively new phenomenon, and they have siezed the imagination of the UK public in a manner that marts and fairs never quite managed, thanks mainly to media-friendly chefs such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall or Rick Stein and to the many Sunday newspaper food supplements. A wave of enthusiasm has swept much of the UK towards locally produced food, perceieved by many as being of high quality or, at the very least, something that contains more nutritional or taste benefits than food commonly available at a supermarket (Moore 2006: 213). Of course, the

socio-economic context should be noted, in that buying 'high quality' food is not applicable to all consumers (see Szmigin et al. 2003). Nevertheless, what is suggested is a movement or ground swell towards something moderately unusual or different. The first farmers' market in the UK took place in Bath in 1997 and from here the concept grew; indeed the Bath farmers' market has spawned much literature in relation to how a farmers' market can 'be done' (see Chubb 1998). In essence, Bath is viewed as the model upon which to build a market, although the National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association (FARMA) does now offer advice on starting a market in the UK. Evidently, farmers' markets have become successful, with over 550 markets, 9500 market days and 230,000 stallholders throughout the UK (farma.org.uk 2007). Of the 550 markets, at least 19 take place in the north east of England.¹

Most interesting regarding farmers' markets are the interactions between producers and consumers: here something different is happening, a producer selling directly to the consumer. While such a style of selling is not unique to farmers' markets in the UK, it provides one of the few instances in which this type of interaction takes place and in which the nature of the interactions are themselves significant. It thus offers an opportunity to explore some of the intricacies of consumption. For example, farmers' markets involve the dynamics of economics, politics and sociability in structuring how the markets are 'played out' (or simply, what goes on at the markets) and equally, how interactions at the markets become mobilized and realized. Actors bring to these situations or these moments of consumption subtle and intricate appreciations, influences, knowledges, networks and links that allow the markets to happen and function. Consuming practices awaken appreciations of, for instance, lifestyles, cultures and emotions (Williams et al. 2001; Ekstrom and Brembeck 2004; Goss 2006), and farmers' markets offer a flavour of how buying food at the markets is different. Rarely at supermarkets or corner shops is something bought directly from the person who produced it. The moment of transaction at a farmers' market is the focus of this thesis, and of significance is the physicality of participating in such an event. The physicality of being there, how actors conduct themselves, interact, employ their senses and negotiate sociabilities and materialities all play a distinctive role.

¹ This number varies, hence 'at least'. Some markets open seasonally, while others have just begun, others have just ceased. Of the 19 markets that occur in the north east, 13 could be called established – in that they have run for over 4 years and average over 8 stalls per market.

Existing literature relating to farmers' markets tends to focus debate on and around the binaries of 'conventional' and 'alternative' (Watts et al. 2005), particularly in terms of the standardization of food shopping and consumption. For example, supermarkets are often viewed as the antithesis to alternative means of consumption with the supermarket as the symbol of conventionality against which 'alternative' markets are seen to represent a challenge (see Cameron 2007; Moore 2008). As a Friends of the Earth pamphlet stresses, 'customers pointed out that farmers' markets represent an excellent alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere that cannot be duplicated anywhere else' (2000: 13). The juxtaposition of binaries such as conventionality and alterity frame much of this thesis, because as suggested in Chapter 2 there is ambivalence towards farmers' markets. A farmers' market is not alternative or conventional, but both, as well as being a much more complex entity than a single binary would suggest. Understanding farmers' markets benefits from an all-embracing or holistic approach, as Castree (2004: 21-2) states: 'conceptual dualisms ... have for too long splintered human geographers'. Alterity is the context in which farmers' markets are readily understood and situated (Youngs 2003; Spiller 2007); as Hetherington (1997) might suggest, farmers' markets appropriate a heterotopic space where a marginal force implies ideals - however temporary or ephemeral that space may be². Nevertheless the practice of shopping at a farmers' market often becomes routine and the proficiency of such actions render them normal. In contrast to what were once reactionary or alternative sites to developments and incidences in farming and food in the UK, farmers' markets become normalized, or to some extent non-alternative, which brings into question binaries such as alterity and conventionality as a framework for understanding.³

The approach of this thesis towards farmers' markets focuses on the nuances and subtleties often in evidence during processes of consumption. These markets are the focal position of this thesis because they offer something different in relation to consumption patterns or experience in the UK. Farmers' markets are different because of, for example, the directness of producer and consumer interactions, the quality and range of food, the outdoor environment and/or issues of 'careful consumption' (see Chapter 2). The markets are not the normal way to buy food

² Farmers' markets in the north east generally occur once a month (the exception being Hexham's fortnightly market).

³ Particularly when, as Jackson et al. (2006a) have explored, conventional retailers appropriate notions of alterity or the alternative.

for the majority of UK consumers; however there is more to be seen and read at the market than alterity, or indeed conventionality. The emphasis is on what motivates both consumer and producer, and the subtleties of interaction and performance in the materialities of the farmers' markets. As will be seen in Chapter 2, there has been debate about farmers' markets and alternative food networks, but much of this work is overly attentive to issues that have been widely covered. In contrast, this thesis applies notions of 'messiness', as well as moments of performance, actor networks and materialities, to issues of shopping and specifically buying and selling at farmers' markets (see Chapter 2). While themes such as these have greatly added to geographical approaches in other areas, they have only recently begun to be applied to spaces of consumption (for example, see Latham 2003; Hitchings 2003; Anderson & Tolia-Kelly 2004). The significance of themes such as these is that they can elucidate the subtleties and nuances of how people understand and conduct interactions. Moreover, when this action takes place in a relatively different context, such as a farmers' market, other parameters, knowledges and meanings come into play.

Thesis focus

The focus of the thesis springs from an interest in the processes of consumption and what it means to buy and sell - as well as what happens to a product, object or commodity and the actants involved along commodity chains or networks (Pred 1996; Cook 2004). These types of processes and meanings concern the object being sold, how the object actually gets to market and what happens to it at the market; however this thesis also considers issues of materiality, affect, performance and ephemerality (see Chapters 4, 5, 6 & 7) because these produce an amalgamation of influences and complexities in relation to farmers' markets. This thesis considers the farmers' market as an assemblage precisely because of the complexities involved in buying and selling. Goss (2006: 241) highlights 'assemblages of consumption' in exploring 'the role of cultural intermediaries in promoting new objects and forms of consumption' and cites a number of case studies which demonstrate the effects that influence processes of consumption. These influences include magazines, new technologies or ethical considerations that help consumers to remain 'well-informed' and ready to consume. Many of the choices made by consumers and producers are guided by 'intermediaries' and these play a profound role in

shaping consuming habits and practices. Consumer choices at farmers' markets are often mediated through, for example, television cookery programmes or through particular food movements like the Soil Association,⁴ and as such, these influences form part of the assemblage of the markets.

Consumption has received much attention in the social sciences and focuses have ranged from spatial perspectives (see Bromley and Thomas 1993) to 'new' retail perspectives (see Wrigley and Lowe 1996), to cultural perspectives (see Shove and Pantzar 2005) and new theories of shopping (see Miller 1998b). Within much of the consumption literature, attention has been drawn to cultural and economic perspectives and while early studies of consumption tended to ignore socio-cultural aspects, more recent studies tend to see the socio-cultural and economic as interconnected, but do not unravel the complexities of the 'skills of the shopper' (Gregson 1995). The priority in this thesis is not the social and/or the economic; rather, it is much as Crewe (2003: 352) states:

I am purposefully side-stepping the now locked-in and tired refrain of 'lets join economy and culture', through either 'unveiling' commodity chains or via circuits and networks. ... what unites much of the better literature in the field at present is a concern for the ways in which particular forms of exchange are accomplished, represented, spatialized and institutionalized.

This thesis engages with farmers' markets through a perspective on consumption led by a theory of shopping that is concerned not just with the social or the economic but the living mesh of networks, chains, regulation, associations, assumption, understandings and relationships that flourish at the markets. The focus is the point of purchase, rather than the use of the commodity or even the production of the commodity. Undoubtedly, the latter figures in the processes of consumption at the markets and, as such, is a component in its assemblage. Nevertheless, shopping at farmers' markets enacts knowledges and assessments that are in tune with 'careful

⁴ The Soil Association is the UK's leading campaigning and certification organisation for organic food and farming (<http://www.soilassociation.org>).

consumption' (Crewe 2001) – a consumption that is guided by, for example, Quality Assured Schemes or alternative means of food supply. Moreover, as Zukin (2003) highlights, 'responsible consumption' often holds many benefits; as she states, farmers' markets engage real people in face-to-face interactions and build and create communities and public space.

Drawing on the approaches outlined above, the thesis makes three principal contributions to the field of geography:

- i) *Food Matters*: The ethnographic approach applied advances how food is understood and perceived in a UK context, and examines the emotive, moral, local and/or quality registers through which food consumption is experienced.
- ii) *Experiencing the market*: The thesis tracks both consumer and producer perspectives on the subtleties and nuances of buying and selling in an irregular environment and provides an ethnographically-grounded critique of farmers' markets.
- iii) *Interrelations*: The thesis highlights and explains practices in evidence at farmers' markets where a holistic way of relating underscores the human (and non-human) relationships, lived experiences, senses, performances, networks, routines, associations and durable moments central to these places.

Aims and objectives:

- The activities at a farmers' market, and specifically the acts of buying and selling, highlight the social intricacies that govern ways of negotiating, commodity chains, modes of practice, routines and the meanings and understandings of the markets. The aim of this thesis is to detail how these activities highlight new and insightful readings of, for instance, economic geography, food geographies, social practices, geographies of consumption and alternative food networks.
- The research strives to develop an epistemological framework that expands explorations of mundane acts like buying food and understandings of the routines and practices that underline such actions. Within this, there is a focus on methodological innovation, especially ethnographically-grounded interventions in debates around food quality and

food networks. Ethnographic details expand understandings of everyday realities and the challenges faced by those who participate in farmers' markets. The thesis employs hybrid ethnographic and ethnomethodological techniques in addressing assertions of 'methodological conservatism' in cultural geography (Pratt 2000; Thrift 2000) (see Chapter 3).

The thesis aims to inform wider public debates surrounding food. The research has important implications for policy and user audiences concerned with food quality and issues of localism or provenance. Chiefly, the ethnographic content of the research will contribute to debates concerning the viability of 'adding value' and 'reconnecting the food chain' (Curry 2002).⁵

In addressing these contributions, aims and objectives this thesis advances geographical perspectives on farmers' markets, food and the interrelations between the actors that frequent these spaces of exchange and consumption.

Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 reviews previous approaches and issues relating to farmers' markets, such as short supply chains or local rural issues. The chapter draws attention to issues of consumption, farmers' markets and alternative food networks, varying concepts in relation to the markets, and the significance of the notion of assemblages in reviewing the 'messiness' of social interactions and practice. Messiness is used in the sense of the gap or fissure between what can be the excitement of the markets and the banal or mundane aspects of attending them. Through analysis of this messiness, the thesis fills a gap, one concerning how farmers' markets literature has been previously applied. The methodology employed is detailed in Chapter 3: the empirical data upon which the research is based relies mainly on in-depth interviewing and participant observation, and the framing of this approach is explored in relation to the ethnographic leanings of this work.

⁵ A specially-commissioned article has already helped to disseminate key issues of the research to secondary school students studying AS/A2 level geography (see Spiller 2007).

Chapter 4 considers the materialities of a farmers' market. Recently, materiality has been applied in a variety of ways (see Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004), and this thesis will explore how 'materials solidify social relations and allow these relations to endure through space and time' (Murdoch 1998: 360). The thesis will trace the 'nuts and bolts' of the markets, the everyday realities of living, working or shopping at a market, as well as some of the rules that apply to managing a market. Initially, the context of the markets will be described, giving details of what is sold and how it gets there, moving to review the space of the market, as well as its ephemerality and how this influences the markets.

Chapter 5 explores how shopping at farmers' markets initiates many affective modalities or intensities of feeling, as performances, objects or beings 'play' central roles in the consumption patterns of the market. The produce sold at farmers' markets can play in a rather unique way with consumer emotions. The markets invariably symbolize elements of nostalgia, localism, healthy living and 'doing their bit' for the local economy in the emotive 'feel good' factor that often ensues from ethical consumption for many consumers, and, indeed, producers. Unravelling emotive and affective influences at the markets, some of the actions and meanings that shape interactions and behaviour will be explored.

Chapter 6 explores social interaction as a component of what producers and consumers enjoy about selling and shopping at farmers' markets. The chapter examines how friendly advice or sales pitches coalesce to construct a coherent and vibrant market and the ways in which producers perform during interactions. It then explores how performance is played out, drawing inspiration from works such as Goffman (1971), Crang (1994) and McCormack (2002). Thrift's (2000) interest (drawing on Dewey (1910)) in a 'sensuous scholarship' that recognises 'nondiscursive somatic practices as crucial to the world' is also examined. The intention is to review these unconscious practices, and those that could be considered in emotive, sensory, and/or performative contexts, as producers and consumers go about their business.

Chapter 7 borrows from Hetherington's (1997:186) *similitude* in exploring the 'juxtaposition of things not usually found together'. It explores the construction of the relationship between producers and consumers and how these relationships are ordered through the spatiality of the farmers' market. Issues of difference offer certain connections and distances and it is suggested that the social assemblages of farmers' markets blend through mobility, particularly through actant-led networks (human and non-human). The thesis then concentrates on some of the relationships and networks at the markets and explores the slippages that are accommodated by the markets. These slippages occur where normal power relations in relation to food are in some way disturbed (see Gregson and Rose 2000), for example, in the shortening of a food supply chain. It pays particular attention to the moral and ethical concerns of farmers' market consumers and producers. Finally, Chapter 8 offers some conclusions to the research and considers some of the recurring themes that run throughout the thesis.

Chapter 2

Conceptual framework: consumption, farmers' markets, alternative food networks and assemblages

An assemblage is, first, an *ad hoc* grouping, a collectivity whose origins are historical and circumstantial, though its contingent status says nothing about its efficacy, which can be quite strong. An assemblage is, second, a living, throbbing grouping whose coherence coexists with energies and countercultures that exceed and confound it. An assemblage is, third, a web with an uneven topography: some of the points at which the trajectories of actants cross each other are more heavily trafficked than others, and thus power is not equally distributed across the assemblage. An assemblage is, fourth, not governed by a central power: no one member has sufficient competence to fully determine the consequences of the activities of the assemblage. An assemblage, finally, is made up of many types of actants: human and non-humans; animals, vegetables, and minerals; nature, culture and technology.

(Bennett 2005: 445)

Farmers' markets are complex, precisely because of the web of interactions and actants of which they are comprised: from the producers and consumers, to the farm animals and vegetables, to the people who run and organise such events, to the slaughterhouse men, to the people who design food labels, and so on. There is a diversity of influences, connections and associations at farmers' markets, much like any form of retail or consumption. The literature involving geographies of consumption has considered many contexts, for example a rethinking of the convergence between both the social and the economic (Whatmore 2002; Fine 2004). In essence, there has been a dualism between the economic and the social within consumption literature: 'culture has been associated with meaning and creativity, with works of the imagination and aesthetic practices that are far removed from the pursuit of economic profit' (Jackson 2002: 3). This chapter argues for a rounded approach to matters of consumption; the social and economic are considered, but not in a hierarchical framework. Instead, it centres on the more emotive, performative or mundane practices and experiences that accompany buying something at a farmers' market. As will be elaborated, the focus is on the precise moment when the producer and consumer actually interact and buy or sell. This moment is important, because, in a sense, it is the apex of the process of consumption. There are of course many influential and practised formalities that precede the moment of consumption and equally, there are many that follow. Nevertheless, the themes explored in this thesis focus on the point of transaction. It expands upon geographical and material culture approaches that have regularly focused on chains/networks/links, commodity use (and re-use), commodity value and/or consumption/retailing environments, rather than the moment of exchange. This chapter reviews previous work that has been accomplished in exploring, for example, short supply chains (Lockie and Kitto 2000; Ilbery and Maye 2005), consumer/producer connections (Kneafsey et al. 2004; Holloway et al. 2007) and alterity in rural economics (Goodman 2004a). However, what these explorations lack is a more grounded appreciation of markets.

There is a physicality to farmers' markets, in what actants do, and this in many ways is the essence of the markets. It is, in effect, its heartbeat. How actants conduct themselves at the markets, how they interact with one another, how they employ their senses in negotiating the sociabilities and materialities all tell a story and have been neglected in literature on farmers' markets. Analysis of these moments thus fills a gap in the literature relating to farmers' markets. There is 'messiness' to the markets in that there is a layering or jumbling effect in the influences

and meanings that structure them. The intention of this thesis is to unpack how the markets are structured, function and are understood by those who participate in them and to explore the rhythms or flows that influence how farmers' markets operate. It uses the concept of assemblage to examine the processes and practices that occur at a farmers' market.

The chapter begins with a review of theoretical work concerning consumption and discusses its framing, especially in terms of 'shopping'. It explores a number of concepts and approaches in positioning the perspectives of the thesis, and establishes how this thesis contributes to the consumption literature. The chapter then examines farmers' markets and alternative food networks (AFNs) and considers some of the recent geographic literature, as well as broader perspectives from other social commentators, in reviewing a number of the themes in which the markets have been explored. Much of this work concentrates on the formations of farmers' markets and AFNs, as well as the contexts that surround the emergence of such phenomena, and the chapter highlights the significance of much of this work in framing its arguments. Concepts such as quality, taste, social embeddedness and localness are important in the interpretations of farmers' markets and food networks and, as such, their impacts on how farmers' markets, in particular, are understood are telling. In essence, this work is invaluable because of both its quality and incisiveness in highlighting potential avenues of investigation with regard to food networks, including farmers' markets (see Holloway and Kneafsey 2000; Zukin 2003). The first three sections of this chapter review the themes of much of this work and the final section focuses on assemblages. Here, the potential of embracing the many issues surrounding a farmers' market are discussed. Throughout the four sections, the chapter argues that while the current literature is useful, a focus on materiality expands this literature. It is the intention of the chapter to include the physicality of the markets, for example, the things, affects, performances and banalities that matter in reaction to, as will be argued, some of the staid economic approaches, or even those with more social focuses. The chapter establishes the significance of exploring issues of consumption through notions of embodiment and materiality.

Views of Consumption – the economic and non-economic

Geographies of consumption and retail, as Crewe (2000, 2001, 2003) has established, awaken many diversities through how this research area is explored and addressed. Crewe provides examples of how issues of place, space and identity are situated within geographies of consumption, as well as issues of, for example, governance and sentient markets, and suggests that 'no society is ordered by a single mode of exchange' (Crewe 2003: 359). More recently, Goss (2006) examines 'the work of consumption' and again provides many examples of the issues that surround consumption. He too highlights much of the work concerning commodity circuits/chains/networks, value and retail environments or spaces. However, of interest to this thesis are the more mundane aspects of consumption, as well as the physicality of consuming. Undoubtedly commodity chains, commodity culture and political economy play a distinctive role in consumption (see Appadurai 1986; Jackson 1999; Miller 1998a; Crang 1997; Williams *et al.* 2001); nevertheless what often guides shopping is the more emotive or personal. For example, as Zukin (2004) suggests, the manner in which people consume is often gender specific – men 'research' purchases and women cinematically perform roles as they shop. Alternatively, consuming preferences might be structured by love (Miller 1998b) – buying for family members, children or parents is often dictated by the preferences of the absent shopper, rather than by the person who is actually consuming. The complexity that underpins such processes is what this thesis attempts to uncover. Consumption literature has examined a wide-ranging number of issues in relation to shopping and, in particular, some of the practice-based accounts have been telling in expanding the knowledges of shopping (see Crewe and Gregson 1998; Besnier 2004). However, by introducing notions of, for example, emotion and performance (see Chapters 5 & 6), a new appreciation of the elements of the interaction and action during processes of shopping can be considered (see Colls 2004). Theories of shopping are regulated by the preferences of consumers and, as such, gaining an insight into these does to some extent rely on ethnographical experience in understanding how, why and where people consume or shop (see Chapter 3). Williams *et al.* (2001: 204) pay 'close attention to the materialities of everyday life' and suggest how shopping can become conditioned or habitual. Their examination of household grocery shopping highlights some of the weaknesses in the consumption literature, in particular, the emotive contexts behind where people shop or do not shop, and they emphasize potential areas of research:

[I]n arguing that emotions are *effects* of transactions between people, places and things, it seems both possible and desirable that geographers investigate the emotional experiences of shopping. While this necessitates an appreciation that identical experiences can engender antithetical emotions in different consumers (e.g. shoddy service could provoke resignation or anger), this is not to argue for the revival of humanistic and/or subject-centred approaches to consumption, where knowing subjects are bequeathed with an endless capacity to shape their material world. Instead, it underlines the need to extend consideration of what is material in studies of 'material culture' to encompass the emotions that are a necessary accompaniment to the interactions between people and things.

(Williams et al, 2001: 218)

Emotional contexts are often embedded in the meaning and understanding associated with shopping; how, why and where we shop is emotive, affective, performative and often boring (as will be discussed). Campbell (1998) suggests that when shopping, there is both an anticipatory aspect and a sensual or sensorial one in how the process is rationalized and understood. Shopping awakens many bodily senses because of how it is performed and practised. For example, how commodities are touched or smelled and the context in which something is bought are significant - buying a wedding dress will create certain emotions that are different to purchasing food. Within this context shopping embodies both the corporeal and cerebral (Boden 2003; Colls 2004). Shopping, even when undertaken in the most mundane or tedious of circumstances, awakens emotive connotations, as Miller (1998) suggests familial love can often play a role when people shop in supermarkets. Certain types of environments, commodities and shopping activities affect how people shop. Shopping, particularly the more practised forms of it such as food shopping, are the focus of much of the work in this thesis and it explores how mundanity and issues such as materiality, affect and performance help to ground some of the emotive context in which farmers' markets are situated. As I state in Chapter 6, when shopping at farmers' markets there is at first a heightened sense of anticipation, or in some cases unease as to what is at the markets and how to shop there. Nevertheless, these aspects can quickly become routine and unconscious.

Knowing what to buy at a farmers' market, as well as in other shopping situations, rests on many variables. However, what I am suggesting here is that there is something unique or different at the markets, specifically because of the affective and performative registers. The importance of 'being affected' and performance in issues of shopping and consumption are subjects that have been relatively neglected in academic literature (see Brown and Stenner 2001; Amin and Thrift 2003). These concepts in relation to farmers' markets engage with moments of intensity, an intensity that is focused and/or direct because of the face-to-face interactions between the producer of the commodity and the consumer of the commodity. A good example would be how an organic producer may describe the benefits of eating organic vegetables to a potential customer. While the intensity of a face-to-face interaction is not necessary to buy the commodity, it does affect the transaction, as drawn into the interaction between consumer and producer is a register that operates in very personalized manner. As Stivale (2006: 32) suggests, 'affects are becomings, becomings that overflow him or her who goes through them, that exceed the force of those who go through them'. Affect, in a sense, is a 'free radical' (Hemmings 2005), one that can be applied or is part of most agency-led activities. Affect features in everyday lives, as lives are engaged with political, aesthetic or interpersonal capacities (Tolia-Kelly 2006) and, as such, any arguments surrounding the interactions and actions at a farmers' market, as well as the emotive contexts of these actions, requires an understanding of the intensities enacted when shopping.

Performance is also an element integral to the interactions and actions associated with shopping and is, again, an important consideration in examining farmers' markets. There is a relational process surrounding most materials (Law and Mol 1995; Murdoch, 1998). Commodities, for example, are part of a link between producer and consumer. 'The way entities are understood is a product of the relationships in which they are located and these relationships are shifting and an outcome of the agency of the things involved within them' (Hitchings 2003: 107), and as Hitchings suggests 'entities' are often performed. For example, in relation to farmers' markets, commodities can embody taste, value or trust (Feenstra 2002; Murdoch and Miele 2004; Sage 2007). The nature of material objects matters because as Jackson (2000: 13) states, 'our emphasis should be on when and where the materiality of material culture makes a difference', and performance allows an understanding of the routines, non-cognitive practices or the relationships that form around the materiality of the markets. Much as Jackson argues for an

expansion of material cultural perspectives, performance draws on discourse and knowledges that are not always immediately obvious. As Thrift (2003: 2020) states:

[P]erformance - through doing – has vocabularies of staging and layout, and knowledges of the way in which different staging and layouts can call forth different dramatic effects, which are vital to our understanding of how bodies are sent about their daily business, positioned, and juxtapositioned in ways which think the world without drawing on cognition.

Agency-led relationships are challenging, because the shifting or changing dynamics they create provide performances that overlay each other, compete with each other and so on. Hitching (2003) warns, by focusing on one performance another is neglected. Nevertheless, performance allows a degree of understanding of everyday actions, such as shopping, and how they are conducted and how some of the materialities of the processes transcend the more staid articulations of material culture, or social and cultural geography (Jackson 2000).

Continuing with the theme of expanding geographical or material cultural approaches, the everyday has received much attention in the social sciences, highlighting the mundane and the banal in relation to consumption, with which, in part, this thesis is concerned. Many social commentators have explored the sites and routines of everyday life (see Lefebvre 1996; Goffman 1971; De Certeau 1984). For example, Willis (1991) examines 'everydayness' in terms of the consumption of commodities, and highlights how technologies ensure a commodity fetish where the mundane is often transformed into the desirable. Willis explores many of the symbolic and performative lores engaged by supermarkets, for example, the displays of food or (non)appearance of staff. As Willis (1991:17) states:

If we take the supermarket as the place where we most commonly come into contact with the fetishized commodities of daily life, then all the strategies developed by the supermarkets to render service personal, to make it visible, rebound in a theatricality whose effect is to create the appearance of use value in the commodities we buy.

Everyday practices and routines of consumers, as Willis argues, are structured by what they see and feel. For example, a consumer standing in front of a refrigerated display unit may not be thinking about the rather mundane processes of how the supermarket is cleaned or how the shelves are stocked in the middle of the night. Willis's focus is on the creative influences of consumption, but as Lefebvre (1996) suggests there are rhythms, and indeed moments, that can transcribe the banal or non-descript into something comprehensible. Lefebvre describes looking onto a busy Parisian Street and viewing only chaos or mayhem. However, when watched over time the scene yields many rhythms and moments that offer connecting, merging and moving components. As he states, 'no camera, no image or sequence of images can show these rhythms' (1996: 227). Anderson (2004) and Moran (2005) explore similar concepts questioning how boredom matters or how queuing matters; both aspects take on significance through, for example, the affective register in which they sit. There is, in essence, irrationality in queuing for public transport, for when the transport arrives the once orderly queue inevitably becomes a mess as people strive to board the transport (Moran 2005), yet the emotive context of waiting or boredom echoes a sense of not being able to show the rhythm of these practices. Of course, there are cultural and economic contexts to the examples mentioned, but inherently the intensities of queuing and boredom enable an evaluation of the circulations and distributions of affect. 'It therefore also potentially opens... how an incorporeal dimension is comported into *matter*' (Anderson 2004: 745, original emphasis).

This thesis moves towards exploring new ways of reading the everyday, mundane or banal (see Seigworth 2000). In addition to focusing on some of the specific materialities of the farmers' markets, the more immaterial notions of the gesture, the symbolic or the hermeneutic also frame much of the debate. The potential in such an approach is as De Certeau (1998:203) argues:

In the gesture are superimposed invention, tradition, and education to give it a form of efficacy that suits the physical makeup and practical intelligence of the person who uses it. If the gesture comes to lose its usefulness, either because a process less costly in time, energy, skill or material appears, it loses both meaning and necessity. Soon, it will no longer exist except in a truncated form, illegible... for the technical gesture really only

lives off its concrete or symbolic necessity (in the case of protective practices, rituals, or religious observances), and most often in tight symbiosis with one milieu.

The moment of transaction at farmers' markets is the focus of this thesis and, here, there is an ephemerality and subtlety captured through everyday shopping habits and practices. There is an ambivalence in this argument because ephemerality and everydayness seem at odds to each other, however many of the practices of everyday consumption and farmers' market consumption are the same, and different. For example, paying for a food product is relatively universal to both experiences, but the selection processes in choosing a product at a market and at, say, a supermarket can often be different precisely because the markets are ephemeral.

Everyday and unusual practices are highlighted in expanding on the 'action' of the market and how they play out, because inherently there are networks/links/chains at the market, as there are social relationships and subtle gestures and reflections in how producers and consumers conduct their business. De Certeau uses the example of the gesture, because this subtle component in many interactions can highlight much, such as 'tradition' or 'education'; however, the meaning and the use of the gesture can be missed or easily lost. This is not to suggest that gestures do not occur or matter in situations outside of farmers' markets, but that the practice of something like a gesture is more embodied during face-to-face interactions. Analysing interactions between actors is a complex task and, in a sense, the process is not orderly and cannot be understood in such terms. As argued below, there is messiness in understanding the markets. This chapter brings materiality into this debate and does not focus exclusively on the economic, the social, or the hierarchical. The focus is on the whole thing or 'every nook and cranny of everyday' (Pred 1998: 151), and while this is an ambitious task it demonstrates an openness to how processes of consumption are acted, viewed and understood. For example, economic-led approaches in exploring such things as food networks or markets *per se* do offer a concise and definitive impression of what goes on. However, these approaches are occasionally reduced to rather neat or orderly summations (see Ilbery and Maye (2005) and how they provide tables and diagrams (see pages 834-837) to illustrate their points; also see Hess 2004). What are often missed are the nuances that arise when agency is introduced into the equation. There is thus room to explore the physicality of the markets and focusing on physicality, agency and messiness fills a gap left by

some of the more staid or model based approaches. Instead, this thesis attempts, as Jackson (2002: 5) states, to:

[D]emonstrate the value of an approach that transcends conventional dualisms between 'the cultural' and 'the economic', drawing out the links between production and consumption and making connections between a variety of scales from the local to the global while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between academic disciplines.

There are dualisms in the approach to the work in this thesis, but the intention is to blur these and highlight, as suggested, the messiness between them. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, one of the focuses is what could be perceived as the dualism of conventionality and alterity. However, it is the juxtaposition of the two that is of interest. Equally, as will be explored in Chapter 4, there are elements of materiality that help in blurring some of the boundaries at farmers' markets, and often these materialities are based around boring, obvious and very mundane activities. For example, small talk about the weather is the fabric to many discussions and/or conversations at farmers' markets. This is a subject common to most UK social situations, but at the markets, it takes on significance because the weather can have direct consequences for UK farming industry (as discussed in Chapter 4). Again, there are hints of a dualism here, for there is a practicality to discussions at the market, in that food has to be sold and bought. Nevertheless, there are additional social characteristics of pleasantness, courteousness and so on, as well as the transfer of food knowledges and/or elements of power (as discussed in Chapter 7). Within the spectrum of small talk there are many things happening, some that are obvious and others that are less so, and in a sense this is what ordinary consumption practices entail (Gronow and Warde 2001; Shove and Southerton 2000; Haukanes and Pine 2004). Conversations and gestures are intrinsic to analysis of consumption and fundamental to seeing and reading the very moment when a commodity is bought and sold.

Seeing that which is blatantly obvious is sometimes difficult and, as Harrison (2002: 489) suggests, an age-old challenge. Often the obvious has a tendency to blend into the background and, therefore, becomes hard to distinguish. The 'background' is the environment that surrounds and sets the scene of our everyday life, the mundanities and repetition that remain relatively

unconscious, yet normalizing. As Wittgenstein (1980: no.69) suggests, 'not what one man is doing now, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we see an action, and it determines our judgement, our concepts, and our reactions'. The hurly-burly or the chaos of life lends itself to the context of how realities are performed and practiced through dialogical, tactile and/or any other reactions. For Wittgenstein, descending into chaos realizes the potential to exercise our understandings of the everyday world. Central to his methodology is looking not to the 'essential', but to inessentials: 'it is only by thinking even more crazily than philosophers do that you can solve their problems' (Wittgenstein 1969: 75). Consequently, reviewing, for example, issues of affect at farmers' markets involves exploring the practice of seeing and reading and the contexts in which these take place, as well as the chaotic zone of indeterminacy,⁶ all of which offer an unnoticed background to the everyday lives of the markets (see Chapter 4).

During the meeting of producers and consumers at the markets, there is a moment of intensity where the focus of both actors' lies for a short period and what is often prevalent is the dialogue or conversations between both parties (see Chapter 3). While Shotter (1997) likes to think of dialogue as a zone of indeterminacy and uncertainty, what can possibly be read from such an instance is the composition of affective and performative relations where producer and consumer interactions can be visceral or relatively indeterminate. Seeing and reading the actions of producers and consumers highlights the roles of passion, emotion and affects within the markets but also hints towards the determinacy of some of the action (see Medina 2004). For example, there is a feeling of expectation in attending farmers' markets; producers and consumers expect to interact, they expect interactions to play out in certain ways and they expect likely outcomes to those interactions. As Wittgenstein (1999: no. 581) states, 'an expectation is imbedded in a situation, from which it arises. The expectation of an explosion may, for example, arise from a situation in which an explosion is to be expected'. In expecting, there is an element of pre-determinacy, especially when clues such as attending the market or wanting to buy/sell suggest apparent conclusions. Occasionally the logic of these situations does not follow – a person can hold preferences or opinions even when not expressed (see Schatzki 1996), yet

⁶ I take indeterminacy from Wittgenstein's investigations into language and how even the most determinative of words have certain ambiguities. As he suggests, 'one can ostensibly define a proper name, the name of a colour, the name of a material, a numeral, the name of a point of the compass and so on'. However, these 'can be variously interpreted in every case' (1999:28). In this manner, I suggest the interpretations or investigations into how farmers' markets are 'played out' also provide many ambiguities, particularly in relation to the everyday and emotive or affectual realities.

preferences offer an indication in highlighting some of the various embodied practices at farmers' markets.

Embodied practices in relation to the economic and the social have been contested (see Callon 1998, 2005; Miller 2002), nevertheless, compatibility between the social and the economic has been considered, in no better way than through social embeddedness. Polanyi (1944) is credited with first developing the notion of embeddedness. Polanyi's thoughts arose from an economic sociological tradition, where he sought to rationalize formal economic behaviour as enmeshed with both the economic and non-economic. His work, along with that of Granovetter, who expands much of Polanyi's thoughts, has become synonymous with embeddedness and rarely do the two names not feature in literature dealing with the subject (Hess 2004). As suggested, the economic is never simple and in many ways, this is one of the challenges faced by this thesis. Discussing social relations and the economic is extremely intricate, as both continuously blend and are relatively inseparable. Economic models are often constructed from an 'agencyless' perspective and when applied to certain situations, their focus often becomes obtuse (MacKenzie 2004). For example, reviews of the more macro level - such as, the UK economy - are often framed within the context of the faceless or more anonymous market 'machine', where consideration of the impact of social relations or networks are less pressing (see Moore et al. 2006). Economic perspectives, in particular, consider elements of kinship as superfluous to economic relations and, as Granovetter (1973) argues, sociability always remains constant within these relations. Granovetter's thoughts, and to a lesser extent Polanyi's, have resonance because whether in pursuit of high profit margin or mere sustainability, there are many hard and fast rules or practices that all economics must follow. As Sayer (2000:2) states:

A market therefore includes not only commodity exchanges themselves and the associated transfers of money and property rights, but the practices and setting which enable such exchanges to be made in a regular and organised fashion. We might add that markets are also normally competitive to some degree.

Phenomena such as farmers' markets are grounded in cold hard economics - they need to produce a profit to prosper. Economic or market theory applies⁷. However, economic and market theories do have their weaknesses and in many ways these are the weaknesses that this thesis attempts to counter. Thinking from a post-structuralist stance, the limits of economic theory and models come readily to the fore, especially for human or economic geography. This argument is well worn (see Martin 1994; Barnes 2001; Hayter 2004), the rigidity of such an application is inconsistent, especially when complicated by agency or actants⁸. What can be taken from Granovetter and Polanyi is their role in the economic 'cultural turn' (Crang 1997; Benjamin 1999; Murdoch et al. 2000); equally, social embeddedness has come to be recognised as a potent approach in exploring the links between the economic and social at farmers' markets (discussed subsequently).

In the context of farmers' markets, and many other examples of retail or consumption, while embeddedness helps to explore processes of consumption there is also a strong argument to consider disembeddedness in relation to how, for instance, shopping is seen and read. Disembeddedness, in the form of formal rational behaviour, is a component that is inevitable to most economic interactions and, while much of the work in this thesis counters notions that actors at farmers' markets can enter and leave as strangers (Slater 2002; Callon 2003), the fact remains that for some actors this is the case. In using the concepts of embedded/disembedded this thesis relates how the links, networks, influences and/or assumptions are juxtaposed at the markets, for example, in the production and selling of food in terms of knowing who produced it or where it has come from. Nevertheless, not knowing or not wanting to know who produced the food, forms part of the interaction or transaction. As Crang (1997: 20) suggests, 'the culture of a person with money does not matter to the seller, and in the case of the client of bureaucracy it should not matter'. There is a rationality and comfort for many consumers in disembeddedness. On the one hand, embeddedness is viewed in terms of trust (Moore 2006; Sage 2007) – if the consumer is in close vicinity to the seller they are therefore less likely to be cheated. However, distance or disembeddedness between consumer and producer accentuates

⁷ Economic or market theories have received wide and varying coverage as exemplified by 'economic geography' and indeed economics as a whole. The theories, and how they are applied to this thesis, revolve around asocial or ideological contexts, where the focuses of such investigation are economic models and/or their trajectories (Sayer 1994). A more empirical approach raises issues, for example, of means of production, exchange or consumption – these issues, of course, are not exclusive to empiricism, but do highlight the accusations and shortfalls often laid at the door of this ideology.

⁸ Many of the commentators mentioned have questioned this and Granovetter (2005:33) in a more recent paper notes of economics and its moves towards the social, 'economists have recently devoted considerable attention to the impacts of social structure and networks of economy'.

trust in the impersonal, because ‘backslapping’ or ‘hushed voices’ in the presence of the consumer is unnerving for the consumer (Weber 1968). For example, some consumers prefer to remain in the ‘dark’ with regard to how, as has recently been promoted⁹, chickens are reared. Of course, consumer knowledges of food, in particular, are growing (Jackson 2002) and consumers are certainly not naïve or gullible; however issues of chicken welfare may not be pressing for all. As Sayer (2000:8) might add, ‘networks do not necessarily fuse the self-interest of different actors into a harmonious and egalitarian whole but may be characterised by inequalities of power, strategic coalitions, dissembling and opportunistic collaboration’. Throughout this thesis it is argued that the interactions and actions within farmers’ markets are situated within issues of embeddedness; nevertheless they also include considerations of disembeddedness (see Chapter 7). Many of these issues have been a focus for some commentators on farmers’ markets.

Farmers’ Markets and Alternative Food Networks

Markets cannot exist without vendors and customers, and a successful market satisfies the need of both.

(Brown 2002: 168)

To date farmers’ markets and AFNs have enjoyed a substantial amount of academic consideration and this section reviews this work (particularly the more UK-led literature). The production of food and the retailing of food is the backdrop for much of this work and the literature is firmly located in debates such as those concerning food networks in the UK or UK food connectivity (see Curry 2002), where these debates have a particular emphasis on ‘conventionality’ and ‘alterity’. Farmers’ markets are generally framed as a reactionary response to rural or farming adversity. They are seen as responding to or creating ‘positive defences’... against prevailing trends of globalisation’ (Marsden et al. 1999: 295). The British farming industry has struggled in ‘this changing world, particularly as a result of CAP [Common

⁹ Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall – a celebrity chef – has led a campaign to highlight the conditions in which supermarket or ‘battery’ chickens are reared (see <http://www.rivercottage.net/AllaboutChickens.aspx>).

Agricultural Policy] reform, in which they [farmers] must deliver environmental goods while learning to live without production subsidies and becoming more in tune with their markets' (www.farma.org.uk 2007). Diversification of farming methods and strategies is often viewed as a necessity in sustaining the farming industry and, as such, the advent of farmers' markets allows an avenue of entrepreneurialism, such as capitalizing on niche markets and products, and productivity (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000; Hinrichs 2000). For many commentators the focus in examining farmers' markets is understanding the economic or ethical motives for farmers' market producer participation (see Morris and Buller 2003; Winter 2005).¹⁰

Situated within these considerations is a valuable reading of the contexts that surround markets, in particular the nascent forces that encouraged the re-emergence of food markets. As Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 286) suggest, farmers' markets 'represent the re-establishment of an old tradition that almost died out in post-war Britain' and, prior to the more recent growth in public interest in food, opportunities to engage with alternative means of food sourcing were limited in a British context (Marsden and Arce 1995; Renting et al. 2003). Opportunities did exist but not on the scale now present to the British public as a whole. For instance, in 1997 there were 240 farmers' markets countrywide in the UK; that figure now stands at over 550 (see FARMA 2007). US interest in farmers' markets somewhat predates the British experience and the US is, in many ways, seen as the home or the front-runner in the emergence of and growing popularity of farmers' markets (Sommer et al. 1981; McGrath et al. 1993; Hinrichs 2000; Brown 2002). This is not to say food markets have not enjoyed success and popularity in continental Europe,¹¹ but what is referred to here is the term 'farmers' market' and its initiation into the public consciousness. In continental or mainland Europe, food markets are to an extent more normalized and certainly entertain a more visible presence in public spaces (see Techoueyres 2007), but they are seldom referred to or considered as farmers' markets.¹² In essence, UK farmers' markets are different to everyday food markets. For instance, UK farmers' markets are generally once monthly and therefore relatively short-lived. Nonetheless, despite their ephemerality they share a commitment to issues such as localism or social and economic

¹⁰ Consumers also warrant attention, particularly their influences on quality food or issues of localism (see La Trobe 2001; Youngs 2003; Moore 2006).

¹¹ As well as, outside of Europe: for instance, Slocum (2007) examines issues of race at Australian farmers' markets.

¹² Equally, the UK lacks the delicatessen-style shop that is prevalent in many European countries. For example, in France and Italy it is common to be able to buy locally produced meats and cheeses alongside home-baked bread and freshly prepared anti-pasto (in the case of Italy), as well as local wines and olive oils. The UK has never had such provisions and, with the decline of traditional grocers and butchers, the farmers' markets are often the closest many consumers have to such shops.

enhancement. Tied into such considerations have been issues of nostalgia and a longing for the wholesome or rustic values of an earlier age (Sage 2007), as well as issues of alterity which, as mentioned, challenge the hegemony of such things as supermarkets, globalization and uniformity of products. As Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 297) continue:

We have conceptualized FM [farmers' markets], as potentially, simultaneously 'alternative' and 'reactionary' spaces, and as liminal, ephemeral spaces. As such, they might be usefully understood as heterotopic spaces; those spaces which, according to Gregory (1994) are 'marginal sites of modernity, constantly threatening to disrupt its closures and certainties'.

The cultural significance of such reactions are undoubtedly important and while farmers' markets offer a relatively ephemeral window into the economic processes of local economies and of actually buying and selling food, they also offer a distinctive approach in understanding the contexts of such actions. Entwined in the practices of the markets are notions of trust, face-to-face transaction, high quality and social embeddedness. These concepts strengthen what makes the markets both different and unique in the face of more conventional means of shopping, for meeting and talking to the person who actually produces the product on sale is a fairly novel idea in an age of post-industrialization (Hinrichs et al. 2004; Campbell 2005).

The focus on farmers' markets more recently corresponds with the markets' growing numbers and expanding public awareness of food issues. As Sage (2007: 183) states, 'in the United States, the number of farmers' market[s] there has grown from 1,700 in 1994 to over 3,700 in 2004', and as a result, it has caught the attention of many social and economic commentators. Much of the current literature situated within AFNs examines the markets with an emphasis on the channels and paths of the food in its journey to the farmers' market. Certainly, issues of social embeddedness have been applied in examining the markets (Murdoch, Marsden, and Banks 2000; Hinrichs 2000), but for the most part notions of alterity have driven considerations of farmers' markets. Kirwan (2004) considers some of the consumer-producer interactions at markets and provides an account of how producers and consumers relate directly during the exchange of produce. Kirwan describes the everyday polemics that the politics of the markets

garner and deciphers the practicalities of buying and selling at the market. As he suggests, buying at a farmers' market instils awareness of locality, quality and certain moral and ethical considerations, but 'concurrent with these ethical motivations, are commercial pressures to valorise the economic potential afforded by embedding production processes in specific ways' (Kirwan 2004: 398). However, Kirwan is careful to suggest that alterity may have its limits in relation to farmers' markets and more generally, in AFNs for, as he suggests, with every success there is a danger of more conventional retailers employing farmers' market strategies and, therefore, reducing the alterity of the markets. Moreover, the mainstreaming of alternative food networks and ethical consumption has also been recognised (Moore, Gibbon, and Slack 2006; Low 2006; Jackson, Russell, and Ward 2006a).

Hinrichs (2000; 2004) highlights some of the more disembedded notions of a farmers' market when she considers the bureaucratic and institutional formalities of selling at the market, such as the rules that may be applied to the market.¹³ However, along with Kirwan, she introduces issues of social learning and embeddedness (discussed subsequently). Hinrichs concentrates on the activities and behaviours of farmers' market participants in highlighting the informal groups and networks that bind supportive social contexts. Her emphasis is in reaction to 'transnational corporations' (or conventionality), but her approach stresses how markets are characterized by the 'fluctuating mixes of social embeddedness, marketness and instrumentalism' (2000: 298), as she suggests the fundamentals of economics, such as price considerations and business or market sensibilities comply with social embeddedness. There is a consistent blending of forces at the markets and, in effect, the economic or 'market arrangements' produced warrant a holistic approach in understanding how they play out. For example, local food helps to shorten networks and supply chains and offers the potential to circumnavigate conventional food chains (Venn et al. 2006), while also embodying some of the more embedded stories, such as producers relaying the details of production processes. Kirwan does not wholly agree with such notions and questions issues of commodity relationships, where this in itself does not offer an understanding of the alterity of the markets. Instead, he relies on notion of 'regard' (see Offer 1997; Lee 2000) and 'embeddedness' in understanding the alterity of the markets. Nevertheless, what flavours commodity relations, networks and exchanges at the markets is how economic imperatives blend with social and cultural imperatives. Despite the connections initiated through face-to-face transactions or local knowledges, there remains a system of rational economics. While markets

¹³ An example of this would be that producers should reside within a radius of, for instance, 30 miles from the markets that they attend.

are socially structured, they are mediated by complex economic, social and institutional behaviours (Granovetter 1985). Ultimately 'commodities can have both use value and sign value, and, of course, it remains the case that they would soon cease to be produced if they did not yield exchange value' (Sayer 2003: 345). The overriding principle of farmers' markets is economic (or sustainability). As has been noted in much of the work on farmers' markets, they offer a means of commercial opportunity to producers and to consumers (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000).

Much of the analysis on farmer' markets crosses over with AFNs and several recent contributors to debates surrounding AFNs and Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) highlight the role of consumer interest in 'alternative foods' (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999; Renting, Marsden, and Banks 2003; Whatmore et al. 2003), and how issues such as localness and quality attract consumers (discussed subsequently). Again, shaping much of this debate is the binary of 'conventional' versus 'alternative' (Watts, Ilbery, and Maye 2005),¹⁴ but of interest is the emergence of key concepts such as trust, quality, embeddedness and localness. These concepts are consistently identified in reviewing AFN and SFSC (Murdoch, Marsden, and Banks 2000; Harvey et al. 2004; Ilbery and Maye 2005) and, as such, offer a distinctive approach in understanding how food chains and networks function in the UK. Equally, as Jackson et al. (2006) argue, what could also be drawn from such concepts is an accommodation of wider interests in consumption and the 'cultural turn', or the stories that surround food. Nevertheless, the literature concerning AFN and SFSC serves to conceptualize the growing interest and diversification in food supply chains and networks.¹⁵ As Goodman (2004a: 4) states of the origins of AFN/SFSC literature:

In broad terms, the catalyst and foundational theme of the Western European AAFN [Alternative Agro-Food Networks] literature is the perception of a 'turn' by consumers away from industrial food provisioning towards quality. A partial list of production and institutional innovations associated with the quality 'turn' would include conversion to organic and low external input farming practices, new premium quality food production, multi-functional farm enterprises, place-based production and marketing initiatives, new

¹⁴ Although as Ilbery and Maye point out there is often a blurring of binaries, where 'there is no straightforward division between production for local and nonlocal markets' (2005:825). Thus, understanding a network as exclusively 'alternative' could be difficult and/or problematic.

¹⁵ Jackson et al. (2006a) challenge some of this diversification with regard to inconsistent definitions and asks are such terms as 'commodity chains' in danger of being a 'chaotic conception'.

modes of food provision, such as short food supply chains (SFSCs), and farmers' markets.

Intrinsic to debates on farmers' market/AFN/SFSC, is multidimensionality, since defining and positioning notions of alterity and food is complex. The diversity of approaches and networks involved under such a focus necessitates an intricate 'web' (Feenstra 2002). Common to most approaches is an appreciation of rural issues and problems, as well as the ubiquitous dualism of conventionality and alterity – although such a dualism does present a challenge, particularly when viewed as oppositional and non-alternative (see Sonnino and Marsden 2006).¹⁶ Nevertheless, what the literature instils is an appreciation of farmers' markets as AFNs, and delivers a large and accessible body of knowledge about how the markets and food networks are structured and formulated. The following section highlights social embeddedness, quality, localness and trust as examples of the multifaceted ways of reviewing how food can reconfigure relationships, meanings and understanding in the face of economic, social or geographical research.

Concepts

Without engagement or some other embedded memory, food easily assumes the role of a 'thing' – something quite separate from the living system that produced it and resides within it.

(Delind 2006: 151)

Food networks weave a web of links, understandings and meanings and in approaching this web many commentators have successfully considered a number of conceptual perspectives. The approaches most readily applied include embeddedness, quality, localism and trust and these,

¹⁶ A concept such as localism may possess two differing comprehensions. As Sonnino and Marsden explain, 'on the one hand, 'local' refers to regional provisioning that links production and consumption around particular sites; on the other hand, it refers to sites and, through them, to product differentiation – i.e. to the process of attaching particular characteristics of a terrain or territory to a commodity, thereby imbuing it with environmental and social qualities' (2006:188).

more often than not, provide the engines in investigating farmers' markets and AFNs. In reviewing such processes, notions of, for example, re-connection, transparency, organics and/or lifestyle engage understandings of food networks (Guthman 2004; Kneafsey et al. 2004; Watts, Ilbery, and Maye 2005; Moore 2006). Undoubtedly, these are issues that help to move food from being a 'thing' to something with a more embodied materiality, where, for instance, transparency in the light of 'food scares' (such as salmonella, BSE, E coli. or Avian Influenza) is an attractive entity for many consumers. Equally, this approach allows a reconnection of 'farming with its market and the rest of the food chain... and to reconnect consumers with what they eat and how it is produced' (Curry 2002: 6), as the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (otherwise known as the 'Curry Report') states in its mission statement. There is a wide range of knowledge to draw upon in reviewing food networks, but embeddedness, quality, localism and trust appear as the most consistent. What connects each of these approaches is a degree of agency, or a focus on the producers and consumer, and how they are considered in relation to farmers' markets or AFNs (Winter 2005).

Central to farmers' markets, and analysis of them, is the consumer/producer nexus, where in effect the actors or agents come face-to-face. This is the premise of much of the literature, highlighting the directness of sales at the market – there is no 'middle-man' – and this acknowledges a relatively unique phenomenon. Tied into the practice of 'direct' exchange are notions of the economic and the social, where economics fuels much of the practice, while social interaction remains relatively inescapable from the interactions between producer and consumer. As Granovetter (2005: 35) suggests:

... when economic and non-economic activity are intermixed, non-economic activity affects the costs and the available techniques for economic activity. This mixing of activity is what I have called 'social embeddedness' of the economy (Granovetter 1985) – the extent to which economic action is linked to or depends on action or institutions that are non-economic in content, goals or processes.

In the context of farmers' markets and AFNs, embeddedness is considered, not as a necessity to an economic transaction, but as something more (see Hinrichs 2000). As Jessop (1999) argues,

the role of social relations is a prerequisite for practically all economic transactions. Embeddedness within farmers' markets and AFNs is a marker of difference or alterity, because in these circumstances the directedness of the interaction is seen and read as beneficial or something that is not commonly available at most food retailers. Embeddedness is paramount in much of the literature on food networks, especially with regard to quality, trust and localism. Social ties and personal connections are the vehicles behind many of these concepts and, as such, frame the practice of exchange. There is an 'entanglement' between the social and the economic (Callon 1998; Jackson 2002), but what matters in this instance are how these tensions play out and are elaborated upon throughout commodity networks, and the exchange networks that abound at farmers' markets/AFNs.

Much of the literature on embeddedness, or more specifically on social embeddedness, contains a novel aspect in confronting 'the relative neglect of any serious theorization or research into the relationships between practices associated with the provision of food and the consumption of that food' (Lockie and Kitto 2000: 3). The benefits of social embeddedness and, indeed, how it is applied to food systems are viewed in the context of, amongst others, the 'quality of relations and configuration of ties' (Uzzi 1999: 483). Recent work, notably with the support of enlightening case studies or empirical research, highlights the trajectory of the growing links and knowledges concerning farmers' markets/AFNs and embeddedness (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000; Sage 2003; Kirwan 2004; Ilbery and Maye 2005). Embeddedness is open to interpretation and, as Hess (2004: 166) argues, for example, it is important to uncover 'who or what the socially embedded actors are, and in what these actors are actually embedded'. Hess's thoughts lie within a spatial perspective where issues of scale help to conflate embeddedness and, as such, he attempts to outline a linear or certainly 'clearer' understanding of embeddedness. This is one of the difficulties with embeddedness - how it is applied and the meanings it generates. As commentators such as Winter (2003) contend, there is no such thing as pure economics, or, as Polanyi (1944: 43) would counter, 'no society could, naturally, live for any length of time unless it possessed an economy of sort'. As such, embeddedness is a relatively ambiguous concept in that, as Granovetter (1985: 481) suggests, 'how behavior and institutions are affected by social relations is one of the classic questions in social theory. Since such relations are always present'. Notwithstanding this, disembeddedness for the more reflexive farmers' markets consumer - for example, those who may want to buy organic food - is a process of the food industry that they may wish to avoid (Moore 2006). In the face of food scares, ethical concerns or environmental

issues disembodiedness has come to represent some of the less favourable aspects of food production and networks (Goodman 2004a; Freidberg 2003; 2004)

The precursor to much of the research concerning embeddedness is the vested interests of those participating at the markets, for instance, how the stories that surround commodities can augment and create something desirable (see Crang 1996; Bryant and Goodman 2004). For example, local food can be a motivating and/or mobilizing force behind participation at a farmers' market (La Trobe 2001). Embedding factors allow the economic and social to overlap or intertwine within food networks. Embeddedness has the potential to disentangle 'the complex meanings and significations attached to acts of consumption' (Winter 2003: 31), particularly, for instance, the politics, motives or underlying philosophies (Kirwan 2004) of actants at farmers' markets/AFNs. The embodied activity of those at the market or those involved in the food network is a common thread in much of the literature. This is in most part due to its value in exploring something as layered as the engagement of producers and consumers at a market. The literature allows an informed reading of the alterity of farmers' market/AFNs, precisely because embeddedness is a distinguishing factor in the face of conventional retail,¹⁷ and incorporates the complexity of the relationships that structure and formulate these types of food networks.

Embeddedness and social embeddedness in terms of food production and consumption have often been associated with a turn to 'quality' commodities in considering what are AFNs (see Goodman 2003). What have been highlighted are the 'local' and more 'natural' contexts that underpin how quality is understood and mobilized (Murdoch, Marsden, and Banks 2000). As Harvery *et al.* (2004: 1) suggest:

Being locally produced, from an identifiable source and involving face-to-face contact between producer and retailer are the presumed relevant attributes. Acceptance of the claim entails acquiescing in the judgement that such produce is in some way better than produce assessed in other ways.

¹⁷ When buying food at a supermarket or corner shop, it is unlikely that a food producer and consumer will actually meet face-to-face.

It is in these terms that quality has often been framed in connection with farmers' markets and other forms of AFNs, and, as such, quality and how both producers and consumers perceive it becomes associated with alterity. Again, there is a strong emphasis on the disembedding processes of 'postmodern' or industrialized production (Murdoch, Marsden, and Banks 2000), and in this light many of the problems of food safety and health concerns generate 'careful' or 'responsible' consumption – quality food in some ways elevates the anxiety. It is in the context of conventionality versus alterity that exploring food networks has engaged with the 'quality turn' (see Harvey, McMeekin, and Warde 2004). Nevertheless, quality, much like embeddedness, is relatively ambiguous in how it is formulated and perceived (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000). Ilbery and Maye (2005: 831) argue:

... quality products can be defined in terms of association (the link to place of origin), specification (raw materials, recipes, or production methods), attraction (the taste, texture, flavour, appearance, or presentation), and certification (a quality mark or label).

Quality, for many commentators, is conceptualized as something that gives a product a 'little extra' and effectively promotes the product above homogenized food standards (Winter 2003; Kirwan 2004; Teil and Hennin 2004). As Ilbery and Kneafsey (1998) argue, quality can often be influenced by the context in which it is situated. For instance, the socio-economic, political or cultural contexts of an interaction (between producer and consumer) may garner how quality is perceived and appreciated; in essence what an actor wants is not always based on physiological principles like texture, taste, or pleasure (Teil and Hennin 2004), since reflexive or subjective leanings may equally apply. Consuming food is not only about eating and, as Murdoch and Miele (2004: 156) suggest, 'meals now carry their industrial properties into the stomachs of modern consumers'. What generates much of the consideration here are the 'background noises' to food and how in many ways these become the deciding factors through which food is used and enjoyed (Makatouni 2002). Quality raises further notions of food choice. In an atmosphere of 'careful consumption and uncertainty in mass food markets' (Marsden 1998: 111) what distinguishes one food from the next is the focus of much of the debate concerning food networks. Moreover, the dynamics of quality allow relationships between people and food to prosper (Teil and Hennin 2004); for example, at a farmers' market the processes and practices of food production may instil collective knowledges or appreciations amongst market participants

(Teil and Hennin 2004; Holloway et al. 2007). It is these relationships, generally those between producer and consumer, which are the focus in much of the scholarly investigations of issues of quality. Farmers' markets, in particular, have come to symbolize quality 'food markets', as opposed to market stalls, which are often viewed as cheap or discount stalls. The quality turn in food markets is in the face of the homogenization of food within supermarkets,¹⁸ and much of the literature reflects this. Exploring quality provides an insight into how agriculture and the food industry have embraced new initiatives (Marsden and Arce 1995; Renting, Marsden, and Banks 2003).¹⁹ It has long been suggested that the UK agricultural industry needs to engage with the 'quality turn' or more specifically with the notion of 'adding value' (see Marsden and Arce 1995; Bredahl et al. 2001; Curry 2002), and reviewing how this is manifest within UK food networks allows an appreciation of just such a dimension of the industry.

There is an emphasis toward the benefits of local food networks in much of the farmers' market/AFN literature. Inherent within this are issues of nationalism (patriotism) and/or regionalism (Lockwood 1999; Jackson 2004). Indeed, in this regard space and territory has become 'both an active and reactive ingredient in the development of alternative [food] networks' (Sonnino and Marsden 2006: 187). Or as Winter (2003: 24) states in relation to local produce versus non-local produce, non-local 'are seen as the prime motivating factors in a move away from the homogenised products of the global agro-food industry in the western world'.²⁰ The framework for reviewing local food can be two-fold, as Delind (2006: 124-5) argues:

The first of these arguments is economic and political in nature. From this standpoint, local food tends to be viewed as a development (or redevelopment) tool, a means to support small to mid-sized farmers and sustainable agriculture... ..The second argument is far more individually focused. From this standpoint, local food represents a vehicle for personal improvement. Here, local food is underscored to be fresher, riper, more nutritious, and thus a healthier product than its long distance counterpart.

¹⁸ There are also issues of polarisation in the food sector, with cheap, poor quality food seen to be available in supermarkets and 'real' food, meaning expensive quality food, available at the markets.

¹⁹ This is especially the case in the face of declining agricultural incomes and a series of crises in agriculture, such as Foot and Mouth (Morris and Buller 2003).

²⁰ Once again, these debates include the dualism of conventionality and alterity.

The context for much of the analysis is how local food facilitates a rational strategy for change and improvement (Marsden 1998). 'Local' is employed in adding value to produce and increasing provenance (Youngs 2003; Winter 2003; Ilbery and Maye 2005), as exemplified by something like 'Aberdeen Angus' beef, where this type of beef has come to signify particular qualities and indeed degrees of provenance (see Bredahl et al. 2001). Equally vital to provenance are protective schemes such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), both of which are EU initiatives to protect the reputation of certain commodities – Champagne being probably the most famous example. Within these schemes, provenance, labelling, territory and tradition are guaranteed to be the 'genuine article'; the scheme gives assurances that commodities will uphold or contain certain qualities and that similar products or companies cannot mislead consumers. Nevertheless, chains that are 'direct' between consumer and produce create improved accountability, confidence and quality (La Trobe 2001). However, issues of localism are not just another 'delight' (Delind 2006) and careful consideration of economic and emotive forces helps assuage viewing it as another marketing tool. Undoubtedly, 'localness' is a complex entity in relation to food networks and Morris and Buller (2003: 561) warn of the arbitrary and contestable nature of a 'local food sector'. They suggest that '50 miles might constitute 'local' whereas 100 miles might not'. Moreover, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 292) found, when reviewing the attitudes of consumers at local market, 'consumers make assumptions about the quality and freshness of the products because of the consumption context' (see Chapters 5 & 6). Nevertheless, localism is a concurrent issue in exploring food networks and offers, for many commentators, a distinct approach in understanding the mobilization and sustainability of food networks. At the forefront of much policy related literature, the notion of localism is considered important in advancing the UK agricultural and food industries (see Curry 2002; FARMA 2004). Evident from the literature is a drive for 'local' to be equated with 'quality',²¹ which seeks to benefit UK food networks.

Running alongside issues of localism, much of the literature (both policy related and academic) focuses on the building of relations between producers and consumers, and often highlighted within these issues are notions of trust in food networks (La Trobe 2001; Weatherell et al. 2003; Goodman 2004a; Yukseker 2004; Granovetter 2005).²² Kneafsey et al. (2004: 1) highlight how

²¹ Something challenging in its own right for local does not necessarily mean 'good' or high quality (see Tomkins 2005).

²² Not forgetting 'enforceable trust' (Portes 1998), which advances the smooth running of business because of the possibility of legal action.

food anxieties can often stimulate social relations, suggesting that building a trusting relationship between producers and consumer can encourage ‘consumer engagement with the production of food’. To a degree, the formation of these relationships helps to alleviate the gaps in knowledge that have become prevalent in a industrialised food system. The gaps are personified as a distancing or a lack of knowledge on behalf of consumers towards the materials they consume (Pred 1996; Lockie and Kitto 2000), for instance, urban children being unfamiliar with where milk comes from (see Chapter 7). Farmers’ markets allow a connection or familiarity that is central to the markets’ materiality and to its social embeddedness, and one that is in contrast to the more disembedded notions of distant or industrial food chains/links and networks. Sage (2007: 178) continues in much the same vein as Kneafsey when he suggests, ‘people are gradually returning to [farmers’] markets because they appreciate the human interaction, the character and taste of the food and the sense of trust that comes from shopping personally’. Reducing the distance between producers and consumers is critical because food networks instil trust and more practically combat ‘risk’. MacNaghten and Urry (1998) engage with notions of risk and risk society (see Beck 2000) when reviewing how the BSE crisis of the mid-1990s influenced the agricultural industry in the UK. They highlight the lack of trust of consumers towards political, institutional and scientific knowledge. Trust in the ‘system’ (the food industry as a whole), as Kneafsey (2004) and Sage (2007) argue, has benefitted through the ‘gluing’ of relationships at farmers’ markets. In taking responsibility for their choices, individuals at a market decide whom to trust and so lessen the risk, or certainly to a degree, take it out of political, institutional or scientific hands. Moore (2006: 419), elaborates on the reflexive element of trust in such a situation:

Trust is part of the reflexive project of the self, and it helps people deal with abstract systems and disembedding mechanisms – the vast, complex and alienating scale of modernity. Active trust (a next step from the basic and elementary trust laid down in the routines of early childhood), whereby both institutions and individuals *open out* to people, is how trust is achieved in late modernity.

(Original emphasis)

In the face of mass-produced foods, and other goods, trust has become institutionalized or relatively unquestioned (De Certeau et al. 1998). However, the rupture of such a premise allows a

reawakening or re-embedding of the notion in terms of food networks, because inherently trust and power relations intertwine (see Chapter 7). As such, trust structures much of the producer and consumer relationship – particularly in the light of the role of the expert (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, trust is for many commentators a binding force in sustaining food networks and farmers' markets/AFNs, and in considering them as 'alternative'. Trust becomes important in constructing meanings that are emboldened in the face of the distancing nature of industrialized food networks. The reflexive is, as Moore (2006) suggests, something that can counter disembedded notions of industrialization. In terms of the food industry, for example, face-to-face interactions at farmers' markets render the interactions at a corner shop a little less embedded, because the shopkeeper is distanced from the production of the commodities they sell. Many commentators have positioned farmers' markets/AFNs as examples in examining how non-conventional forms of food networks are taking place, and trust, embeddedness, quality and localism have been rightly emphasized in the literature relating to food networks. However, tracing the impacts, practices and routines of these, in terms of farmers' markets, needs advancement.

Assemblages

Assemblage thus seems structural, an object with the materiality and stability of the classic metaphors of structure, but the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure. It generates enduring puzzles about 'process' and 'relationship' rather than leading to systematic understandings of these tropes of classic social theory and the common discourse that it has shaped.

(Marcus and Saka 2006: 102)

The complexity of social life generates a methodology that must acknowledge heterogeneity and many far-reaching conundrums, for example, interruptions, movements, resistance, change or agency. These conundrums help to enlighten (and at the same time complicate) the processes and relations of the social world. Obviously, thinking structurally, as well as in a more fractured or multiple sense, is difficult when attempting to embrace everything in a single or central

theoretical framework (Venn 2006). A key concept within this thesis is the notion of assemblage. An assemblage is a combination of many things, most notably networks and connections that involve humans and indeed, non-humans (Latour 1991; Whatmore 2002; Bennett 2005). As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the motives in moving away from a focus on consumption in terms of the economic or social have been to broaden the concept of shopping *per se*. It highlights the structures, of the economic and the social for example, and how they are disturbed by the heterogeneity and empherality of everyday life; in a sense, the rules to relationships, cognitive experiences and/or cultural movements are arbitrary and diverse. Discovering and understanding the disruptive nature of everyday life has many guises, as Laurier and Philo (2006: 4) suggest:

In the ceaseless flow of life, 'our' privilege and even point as researchers is surely that we can take the time to examine details-at-hand which, in painstaking ways, could teach us about so many classic topics of the social sciences and humanities: imagination, explanation, description, perception, memory, expression, performance, definition, emotion, cognitive, information and, of course, representation.

What is suggested here echoes the calls of non-representational theory (see Thrift 2000b; Revill 2004). However, the focus of this thesis is toward a more inclusive appreciation of the things that are involved during moments of consumption – more specifically things that are representative. It considers the notion of assemblages at farmers' markets in order to highlight how the material influences that abound are a collective of working elements. Farmers' markets, as suggested, offer a different form of retail, because of, amongst other things, the directness of contact between producer and consumer. Within this interaction there are, for example, social norms, economic settings, environmental conditions and/or ethical contexts that structure the processes of shopping and selling at a farmers' market (Bennett 2005). Seeing and reading such an amalgamation of activities is possible through the framework of assemblage, where the embodied practices and routines of the agents at hand, as well as the materiality of the situation are acknowledged as central components in what happens at the markets. I engage with the nature of agency within food networks - what I call here 'messiness'. Messiness can develop the labyrinth of influences that combine to facilitate any given farmers' market. These might include the multifaceted actions and interactions that abound during the process of buying and selling

(Crewe 2003; Murdoch and Miele 2004; Kirwan 2004), for example, all that happens during moments of human (and non-human) agency (Becker 2001; Whatmore 2002) and/or how perceptions, relations, performances, materialities and affective-registers fold and unfold (Hetherington 1997; Dewsbury 2000; Thrift 2000). All of this, in turn, intersects with issues of morals and ethics (Barnett et al. 2005; Sayer 2003) and, indeed, the more policy-led issues surrounding food and the reconnection of the food chain (Curry 2002; Jackson *et al* 2006). Grouping all these issues encourages an appreciation of the assemblage that is the farmers' market and its relations, processes and practices. To date, very few commentators have attempted to incorporate these perspectives into an exploration of farmers' markets and, as such, seeing the markets holistically provides an opportunity to comprehend how such forces play out.

Farmers' markets present an assemblage because both the place of the farmers' market and the agents involved are relatively autonomous but equally connected. When embedded in place there is a sense of what the place is and what it brings (see Massey 1994). In addition, agents help to both rupture and coalesce the foundations and meanings of the place. There is a constant reconfiguration in evidence where the interactions and meanings associated with a particular place are continuously negotiated and redefined. Illustrating such arrangements entails an awareness of a movement or diversity that creates 'collective assemblages of enunciation' (see Deleuze and Guattari 1986; 2003; Guattari 1995). For Deleuze and Guattari, assemblages demonstrate a fractious or convoluted system, as can be understood through linguistic models, and these models can become easily complicated - language is 'essentially [a] heterogeneous reality' (2003: 7). As De Landa (2006: 10) states, 'agency is constituted by its involvement in practice which, in turn, reproduces structure'. In focusing on farmers' markets my intention, much like De Landa, is to consider a more ethnographical or agency-led approach. In gaining a more ethnographical perspective what emerges from the social contexts is a tangibility, for example, something like a face-to-face conversation where, verbal language is not the only communicant at play, but also facial expression, body language or posture (Deleuze and Guattari 2003). Agency presents a wide range of social influences, and further complicates how social processes stand within the spectrum of 'system and lifeworld' (see Marcus 1995). As Marcus and Saka (2006: 101) explain:

Certain influential tendencies of theory over the past two decades have encouraged a focus of attention in research about social process and cultural meaning on the ephemeral, the emergent, the evanescent, the decentered and the heterogeneous, all the while not giving up on a long established commitment to account for the structured and systematic in social life.

Much of the literature discussed is haunted by notions of the social and the economic, embeddedness or disembeddedness, alternative or conventional, or even, orderliness and messiness and within this spectrum, there is a distinct structuring. In essence, the notions that haunt the markets are needed to locate the theoretical inputs structured around the markets. However, because an assemblage is anything but neat its application highlights the messiness of social relations at farmers' markets. An assemblage, because of its consistent emerging and coagulating properties, does not run smooth; there are layers or a mess of influences, experiences and materials that continuously blend, and often what can be seen and read is in the blend. The coming together at farmers' markets is the moment of interaction or transaction and this is an amalgamation of the ephemeral and structural. The moment is both externalized and internalized. For example, secondary stories also play an important role at the farmers' markets. Secondary stories include how a producer got involved with farmers' markets and the business path they had to adopt in order to do so. These are extremely important to farmers' markets as an assemblage and do formulate much of what goes on at the market, but what I stress here is the binding moment of the assemblage where all that constitutes the farmers' markets comes together. As Bennett (2005: 462) explains:

Deleuze invented the notion of 'adsorbism' to describe this part-whole relationship: adsorbism is a gathering of elements in a way that both forms a coalition and yet preserves something of the agential impetus of each element.

Bennett advocates a sense of continuous movement and the propensity to collide and merge. Much of what is considered here is the messiness when two items blend into one, or the

halation²³ - where what was once distinctive through a process of blending becomes ambiguous. Assemblages encompass plurality. Deleuze and Guattari (1986) relate assemblage to 'major' and 'minor' pieces of literature. Forms, styles or make-ups bind major literature while minor literature is relatively free to push boundaries or become different. The workings of farmers' markets are minor in comparison to the majors (for example, a multinational supermarket).²⁴ Thus, farmers' markets are relatively free to encourage something new or different. Farmers' markets are ephemeral entities and while many of the surrounding stories to the markets (for example, farming practices or consumer choices) are not in themselves short-lived, the moment when they come together at the market is (see Chapter 7). Within the meeting of farmers' market consumers and producers there is an ephemeral positioning; the moment is fleeting; the interaction is short. Ephemeral processes often structure the networks and relations that persist at the markets. There is a crossover here, in a true assemblage context; despite the moment of exchange being fleeting, its framework remains managed, performed, practiced and/or structured. Both actants within the interaction are involved with a relatively regimented or certainly predictable outcome, all of which flavour the processes and routines of the assemblage.

This thesis draws attention to the social routines and practices inherent at a farmers' market. There is a collapse in the time-space of the markets because objects (the items for sale) often come to embody the subject (see Chapters 5, 6 & 7). At farmers' markets there is a relatively unique or distinct form of consumption because of the directness of the selling and buying; embodied in the routines and practices is a register or spectrum of materialities, emotions, performances, affects and networks specific to this style of shopping. Through the space of the farmers' market, the interaction is framed, and there is a malleable moment where all the surrounding stories converge into that moment of transaction, and, as such, collide into a relative singular focus. The moment, however, is never in isolation and histories and futures will always intertwine, but the present does offer a temporal instability or an emergence of possibility and/or *immanence* where activities become normalized or unconscious.

²³ I take this term from Seigworth and Macgregor Wise (2000: 141-2). As they explain, 'Halation is what happens when the bright-ness-intensity of a photographic image exceeds the boundaries of its object. A concept emerges *not* as a separable or external thing, but rather as that which is intagliated or extruded and, thus, can serve to unfold the real but near-imperceptible atmosphere of these sorts of effects. The concept thus created, enters the picture in the overbloomed space of an halation: still in the situation and working in the context of its (the event's) 'about' – not unlike the way in which an incorporeal vapour hovers over a battle'.

²⁴ Of course, both styles of markets are bounded by some of the fundamentals of the market, such as adherence to the law or profit and loss considerations – or even 'enforceable trust'.

Conclusion

It has been the intention to introduce 'messiness' in this chapter. Drawing attention to the ambiguity of social situations highlights the messiness in which they are structured, framed or played out. Assemblages offer a window of opportunity to explore many of the complexities of such situations, and particularly those at farmers' markets, where themes such as connections, networks and associations abound. Its potential is, as Deleuze & Guattari (2003: 91) suggest, a result of the fact that assemblages have 'neither base nor superstructure... it flattens all of its dimensions onto a single plane of consistency upon which reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions play themselves out'. In short, a farmers' market is not economic or social, is not conventional or alternative, but is all of these, and much more besides. Within such a spectrum each entity, theme or component of an assemblage can present a glimpse into how actants formulate their actions in the presence of others, or in the anticipated presence of others. Describing moments like those when a producer and consumer meet at a farmers' market involves a litany of stories and within each of these stories is a whole host of influences, thoughts and/or motivations. These moments are important in unravelling farmers' markets, because they fundamentally structure how people buy and sell. Conceptualising such complexity and indeed ambiguity is the problem faced by social and cultural commentators. The work of those commentators mentioned in this chapter illuminates the approaches applied in this examination of farmers' markets. There is a gap in this literature. For example, in exploring such things as food networks or markets *per se*, economic approaches offer a concise and definitive impression of what occurs. However, these approaches are occasionally reduced to rather neat models and tables - what is missed are the nuances that arise when agency is introduced into the equation. The ambiguities and messiness of the markets help to fill this gap. There is thus room to explore the physicality of the markets and this physicality, agency or messiness fills a gap left by some of the more staid, or model based approaches. This thesis is a snapshot of three farmers' markets, bounded by factors such as time or space, and while the markets 'live on' the observations and thoughts of this thesis are firmly rooted in the 'here and now' (see Chapter 7). This is all a snapshot can truly offer. That said, it is the intention to advance our understanding of the routines and practices of farmers' markets through methodological innovation and, in particular, through the use of ethnography. Chapter 3 explores the research methods of this thesis and outlines the context of the research.

Chapter 3

Between the exciting and the mundane: context and methodology

Often, no doubt, this will be a matter of being there – and again! and again! – returning to a known although probably changing scene. Multi-site ethnography, however, may fit particularly well into that more drawn-out, off-and-on kind of scheduling, as the latter does not only allow us to think during times in between about the materials we have, but also about where to go next. It could just be rather impractical to move hurriedly directly from one field site to the next, according to a plan allowing for little alteration along the way.

(Hannerz 2003: 213)

As discussed in Chapter 2, farmers' markets have been at the centre of a range of academic attention, as have concepts associated with them such as alternative food networks. However, there is room for a more ethnographic approach to farmers' markets and this chapter highlights the application of such approaches. The data, information or fieldwork that are the backbone of this thesis rest predominately in the tradition of ethnographic research, where the researcher 'lives in' or certainly experiences at first hand the processes reviewed. Of course, this style of research limits the researcher to a 'sociologically determined situation, which in turn, limits their [the researcher's] access to certain information and experience' (Stoller 1997: 27). Framing research and most ethnographic research in particular, is predetermined by how it is structured

and ultimately in the question(s) it is asking. These types of shortfalls, where the theoretical framework limits the researcher, have been contested – for example, by such ideas as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1997) or more phenomenological approaches (Merleau-Ponty 2003). The problem facing the research in this thesis was gaining access to the world around this project, more specifically getting to know the markets and those that frequent them. As Goulding states (2005: 299):

The hallmark of ethnography is fieldwork; working with people in their natural settings. The voices of participants are an important source of data and should be allowed to be heard in the written end-product, which should be a coherent, fluent and readable narrative.

The ethnographical approach to research focuses primarily on in-depth interviews and observations, where most details are captured, and this is then related to the research questions at hand (Limb and Dwyer 2001). Those at the centre of the research are often the ‘informants’ or the ‘gatekeepers’, and these are the people that enlighten the ethnographic researcher. Allowing people to speak – and then writing their voices – gives a certain authentication to how ethnography is framed, for it presents snippets of peoples’ lives and thoughts. These are snippets, because the moment of interview or observation is unique; those moments will never happen again, and, as such, they allow the moment to disseminate the happenings and attitudes of the time. Attitudes change; people’s habits or preferences also change. However, in observing some of the actions that are detailed in this thesis over a relatively long period some concerns related to ephemerality are alleviated. The point is that any research can only be taken at face value. For many ethnographers, the standard approach is to concentrate on the mundane activities of everyday life, then move on to the more ‘exciting’ or extraordinary events – the gap or fissure between the two being the focus of attention (see Turner 1969; Goffman 1971). The idea of a gap or fissure is, in many ways, a focus of this thesis, for viewing farmers’ markets through the prism of an assemblage offers an opportunity to see the gap between the exciting and the mundane at farmers’ markets (Shotter 2001). There is an undercurrent of the mundane at farmers’ markets, but also a tone of excitement or the extraordinary, in no better way exemplified by the relatively ephemeral nature of the market. This creates a tension between it

being normal and abnormal,²⁵ and this is a recurring theme throughout the thesis: how the markets enliven a certain amount of duality.

There are a number of underlying theoretical currents that inform this thesis (see Chapter 2), most notably, consumption, alternative food networks relations and assemblages, and within these there is ample scope for formulating an empirical ontology in relation to farmers' markets. However, there are pitfalls in any research, none more so than issues of power or politics and how informants are represented (see Cook 1997; Crang and Cook 2007). When representing or explaining what has been found during the process of fieldwork there is a risk of reporting the findings from a rather loaded perspective. Entering the world of the informant and representing their thoughts is difficult and may not always concur with that of the informant. In the first section of this chapter, the world of farmers' markets is presented rather than represented. There is an amount of necessary fluidity when dealing with people, and a degree of sensitivity or an amount of awareness needed in appreciating how people's lives are being interrupted. Certainly, this too suggests problems, the researcher's presence alters or precipitates reactions and actions (Geismar and Horst 2004), but without attentiveness to those that are being interviewed or observed 'doors' of opportunity will rapidly close on the researcher (England 1994; Wai-chung Yeung 2003). Nonetheless, this chapter explores the approach utilized in considering farmers' markets, especially in the light of an assemblage.

The first section of the chapter details the approach to the research and focuses on the ethnographic process embraced (or not). It is the intention here to elaborate on ethnography and suggest how this thesis has attempted to expand on this with issues of ethnomethodology and with a more performative appreciation of how to present that which is 'going on' at the markets. The second section gives some context to the research and introduces the geographical area and period of the research. The final section of the chapter concentrates on the methods employed throughout the research, giving a brief summary of each approach and how it was applied in the field. By listing the methods in this way, the intention is to give a flavour of the processes engaged in when attempting to gain access. A key issue was, as Crang and Cook (2007: 61) ask,

²⁵ Normal, because the practices and routines in evidence at the markets are no different to those seen at any outdoor market or at a corner shop or supermarket; however there is a degree of abnormality in meeting producers face-to-face. Additionally, because farmers' markets are not an everyday occurrence, generally, they are monthly or at most fortnightly; this too may add a degree of abnormality.

‘how on earth do you approach (almost) complete strangers and persuade them to talk to you about their thoughts, feelings and actions?’. Initiating contact with strangers is in many ways quite a bizarre act, especially when you ask them to relay some of their inner thoughts and, in essence, the process is one of trial and error. What textbooks and literature tell us about doing ethnography or fieldwork can only take the research so far; the practice of fieldwork is entirely different. Often the work is intuitive (knowing what to say when) or demands that one just sits there in silence; there are no hard and fast rules.

Approaching ethnography

‘You know the first steps of getting to know a community are the hardest’

(Whyte 1955: 292)

The current literature on food networks gives a strong foundation into how farmers’ markets and AFNs are theorized and/or approached empirically and this chapter builds on their findings. It develops a deeper or embedded sense of how the markets ‘play out’ (Bowman 1996). While much of the previously discussed literature is strong in methodological or practiced based accounts, it explores a more ethnographic account in relation to farmers’ markets: what Jackson might call the ‘ethnographic moment’, where an over-reliance on ‘analysis of discourse and representation’ is addressed (1995: 1875). Ethnography suggests how its framework can enlighten the practicalities and the qualitative detail of exploring the markets. Ethnography emanates from the field of anthropology (see Clifford and Marcus 1986) and in classic anthropological terms it is embodied as living within a culture, tribe or community and observing all that goes on (see Turner 1967; Goffman 1971; Raybeck 1996). In a more contemporary setting, ethnography has also been employed in giving a somewhat ‘down and dirty’ or embedded perspective on social and cultural phenomena (see Bourgois 1995; Bowman 1996), as intimate experiences of communities are felt closely by the observer/anthropologist. Undoubtedly, interpretation, translation and/or empathy play a distinctive hand here. Focusing intensively on a single site or community unquestionably produces vivid and decisive

commentaries and inherent within this type of research is an engagement with 'the real world' (Ortner 1984; Stoller 1989) as researchers experience at first hand the phenomena observed. As Hannerz (2003: 202) elaborates:

The idea of such a thorough, formative, exclusive engagement with a single field is of course at the base of the enduring power in anthropology of the prospect, or experience, or memory, or simply collectively both celebrated and mystified notion, of 'being there'.

As simply 'being there' or embedding adds a certain authenticity to the experience, for, in a sense, the researcher becomes a relatively informed observer. While there will always remain a distance between observed and observer there have been attempts to shorten such bridges, as Duneier (2001) has done in allowing his participants to read and comment on his interpretations. Nevertheless, ethnographic experiences attempt to embrace the distinctions between 'system and lifeworld' (Marcus 1995) and, as such, apply the theoretical to the practical – or vice versa. Ethnographic approaches invariably hinge around notions of agency, symbols, beliefs, values, social relations or a 'complete' description of a community (Becker 2001) and introduce a 'reading'²⁶ of practices and cultural or social forms.

The ethnographic moment is a snapshot used to represent certain constructions or formations. Marcus (1995) and Hannerz (2003) have challenged the notion of a single-site ethnography study and suggest that in some ways such a review is not holistic and is discontinuous. For them, what is lost is some of the context of the situation or 'moment'. They argue that there is 'breadth' in relationships and 'points of departure and points of arrival' (Hannerz 2003:202). Marcus and Hannerz propose a multi-site approach that assimilates notions such as 'breadth' into the construction of social relations. As Marcus (1995: 96) argues:

²⁶ However grounded or informed observations may be, they remain interpretative and, as Marcus (1995: 112) would suggest, tinted with objectivity, as can be the case in multi-sited ethnography. Marcus expands on how the ethnographer's discourse can often overlap with those that are encountered during research, and needed in these moments is a degree of reflexivity or an understanding of the ethnographer's position. Marcus argues that 'objectivity (rather than the often presumed subjectivity) that arises from such a scrupulous, methodological practice of reflexivity' should be engaged.

This mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction... by which much ethnography has been conceived.

One example of how a multi-site approach can broaden ethnography is through the exploration of commodity chains and materiality (see Geismar and Horst 2004). The production and reproduction of socio-material practices generates a host of social meanings and understanding and these in turn become entwined within materials, for example, food, (Miller 1998a; Harbers et al. 2002). Multi-sited ethnography encourages a wide perspective embracing how social relations unfold, and particularly the circuits and networks that compound the material impact on relationships. As Cook (2004) suggests, 'follow the thing'. Here Cook follows the network of a Papaya fruit from a Jamaican farm to the shelves of a UK supermarket, and beyond to a 'north London flat'. Cook traces the connections between western consumers and the 'distant stranger', and in doing so highlights the route of the papaya. This further serves to highlight the economic, cultural and/or political beacons that illuminate the network.²⁷ Situating his argument within a supply chain reinforces the value of a multi-sited (or as Cook calls it 'multi-local') ethnography. Exploring the dynamics of relationships, despite the relative complication of geographical distance, encourages a globalized enmeshing of a commodity; the papaya highlights the hidden or unrecognized links between a Jamaican farm worker and a London supermarket consumer. This example attempts to 'get behind the veil, the fetishism of the market' (Cook 2004) and underlines the strange qualities of everyday life and commodity chains. It distracts from the comfort of the everyday, especially in relation to consumption, because it forces the viewer to consider for instance the ethical or moral circumstances of just such a circuit and indeed, the more complete story of the social relations embodied in the connection between consumer and worker/producer.²⁸

The process of ethnographic research, as mentioned, is a means of applying empirical and material data to a more theoretical outlook. There have been calls to expand geography, in this regard (particularly cultural geography), with new empirical workings (see Thrift 2000a) and as a result issues such as performance and/or non-representation have been championed in this

²⁷ See Chapter 7 for a further review of connections over distance.

²⁸ The only problem is that the network proliferates and never ends, so drawing a boundary around the research is difficult.

pursuit (see Dewsbury 2000; Dewsbury et al. 2002; Pratt 2000). This thesis does consider a more expansive view of empirical work, although is very conscious of ethnography's tendency towards the interview and observation. For the most part, this thesis relies on both interviews and observations and it is empirically framed; however, there is also a degree of ethnomethodological appreciation. In general, ethnomethodologies are galvanized or constructed with specific reference to ethnography and ethnomethodologies build upon ethnography. As Garfinkel (1996) suggests, ethnomethodology offers the 'what more': what is so recognisable that ethnographers readily know and understand it. In essence, ethnomethodologies make the mundane extraordinary. Activities such as shopping are observed and reflected through a prism of how people make this act happen, and equally, how the act is understood or how the act simply is (Lynch 1999). In order to learn 'from' and not 'about' requires a more substantive appreciation of what is being observed or experienced, and within this is a positional recognition of where the reader is, where the research is and where the people in the picture are, all of which needs to be realized (Laurier 2001).²⁹ It is the something more that often eludes geographers, warranting close attention and, in essence, a fresh approach or 'malformed and deformed' perspective on what they are seeing and reading. Ethnomethodology encourages appreciations not only of the actions but also 'the setting of interaction' (Giddens 2002), and in exploring the organisation of society, as this approach aims to, there is a focus on description and not theory. Garfinkel's (1974:18) interests lie in issues of social ordering and in exploring how some of these constructs are to be understood. He suggests 'common sense' and knowledge of ordinary affairs are 'organized enterprises, where that knowledge is treated by us as part of the same setting that also makes it orderable', in much the same way as practical action and practical reasoning embody observable detail (see Garfinkel 1996; Laurier and Philo 2006).

Within an approach such as ethnomethodology there are issues of reflexivity through how the researcher turns a 'critical eye' towards their own means of interpretations and indeed, in this instance, what constitutes something like 'ordinary' (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000). As Smith (2000b: 240) contends:

²⁹ For a good analogy, see Laurier (2001: 486-7) where he suggests *America* (Baudrillard 1998) is generally read from a rather Euro-centric perspective of the highway 'myth' or a sense of the nomad, rather than a road-trip in America with a French-speaking tourist.

For the ethnomethodologist, relationships between the world as it 'is' and as it appears to be are not at issue. The question is 'how does the world appear to be. And how do people make it like this?' The answer is derived not only by analysts observing a variety of social settings, events and process in meticulous detail, but also by them observing and reflecting on their own activities.

I am attempting to highlight a concise account of the markets, albeit one situated in ethnography and ethnomethodology and within this context the focus is on such issues as behaviours, relations, activities and 'facts and fancy'.³⁰ There is a reflexive and unconscious accountability in considering how social order is realized and indeed how something like the 'standardised relational pairing' (Sacks 1995) of two people, for instance, talking in an everyday context, plays out. Reflecting on the social, there are many bridges in exploring the familiar or the systematic process like going to a farmers' market. As Giddens (2002: 235) argues:

Motivational components of action, which I take to refer to the organisation of an actor's wants, straddle conscious and unconscious aspect of cognition and emotion...but the unconscious, of course, can only be explored in relation to the conscious: to the reflexive monitoring and rationalization of conduct grounded in practical consciousness.

Unconsciousness is a theme that will occur throughout this thesis and, as such, is used to explore notions of reflexivity within farmers' markets. As will be argued, unconsciousness generates appreciations and understandings that illuminate many processes and indeed, practical actions and practical reasonings (see Chapter 6). In essence, it draws upon the contexts of everyday ordinary practices that lubricate the durability of interactions at farmers' markets and how there is a reflexivity in the unfolding actions of farmers' market participants (Laurier 2001). Crang (2003: 499) extols such an approach, as an 'attention to *definition* of setting, *actions* within that setting and the *identification* of solving the geographical problems that are solved every day'

³⁰As Garfinkel (1974) would suggest, this is in relation to 'evidence' and the 'demonstration' of that evidence, where ambivalences and/or interpretations are part of empirical research. Such contexts can be understood as 'the fact factory' - or the construction of knowledge - where the contexts are open to many manipulations and understandings (see Potter 1996).

(emphasis in original), can add to the understandings and expansions of ethnographies and indeed, ethnomethodology in terms of geographic research.

Of equal importance to ethnography and, indeed, multi-sited ethnographies are the connections and practices that illuminate the background to many of the stories surrounding food networks or farmers' markets. As Cook argues, everyday practices construct the rhythm produced within multi-sited applications. McCormack (2002: 476) considers dancing and 'the rhythmic play between milieus' in exploring the affective and/or non-representational components embodied in such an action (see Dewsbury et al. 2002; McCormack 2005). What becomes evident for him is the combination of flows, meanings and affects that produce a language, of sorts, that is distinctive to the dance movements. 'Expressive qualities', as McCormack (2002: 476) suggests, form an assemblage:

These expressive qualities do not exist as self-contained entities, but enter into relations with one another, relations that constitute 'territorial motifs', and 'territorial counterpoints'. Through the interplay of these motifs and counterpoints, a particular territorial 'style' emerges.

What this thesis draws upon is the creative force of the rhythms, flows and movements, and their overlapping with the ethnographic experience. Rhythm suggests a certain continuity and balance and equally allows an insight 'into the paths and trajectories' that formulate how people live and conduct their lives (Crang 2001). Rhythm incorporates many influences in promoting the style and balance of how, in this instance, something like the everyday is sustained. Take, for instance, the senses³¹ involved in everyday experiences, particularly in the context of something like food, where there are often definitive practices as to how food is evaluated, cooked or eaten. As such, the rhythms of sourcing and selecting food involve multiple flows and, indeed, temporalities or snapshots. For example, when choosing a piece of meat at a farmers' market, a person's visual preferences may form the basis of the decision (see Chapter 5). The farmers' market is, as I have suggested, one site and one snapshot in the interactions between consumers and producers, and often entangled within the markets and the moment is a rhythm of slowness.

³¹ The senses I refer to are taste, touch, hearing, sight or smell.

As Parkins (2004) suggests, time in the face of everyday or modern/fast living needs to be reconceptualised. Parkins considers 'Slow Food' – a movement, which counters fast food and celebrates the pleasures of food – and she examines speed and notions of slowness in relation to alternative food practices. The context of her argument is the high speed of 'consumer culture' and food is a commodity that can represent the homogenizing effects of globalization and much like the farmers' markets, Parkins argues for a reflexivity in the politics, practices, habits and ethics of 'Slow' consumption. At the markets, similar elements of reflexivity are embedded within the flows and rhythms of producers and consumers, especially in the time-honoured practices of food selection, preparation and consumption. Negotiated through personal preferences or practices of consumption, the rhythms and flows of conventional shopping are ruptured through an increased attention to slowness, quality and/or production techniques and, as such, highlight, once again, the binaries between something like conventional and alternative food shopping.

Indicative to something like personal choice or preferences is how affective registers (see Thrift 2004a) engage with certain realizations: as Stoller (1989: 37) ponders in reference to food, 'how can we know if we cannot see, touch, or smell the phenomenon?'. This is something explored in later chapters (see Chapters 4 & 5). It is important to draw attention to the complexity of an ethnographic approach and the difficulty of embracing personal knowledge and indeed, the wider spectrum of how a market, a community, a society or a city flows and the rhythm that it produces. In effect, farmers' markets are an assemblage of flows and rhythms³² and much like any city there are innumerable constructs that paint the background to just such a story. However, a multi-sited approach does allow an amount of advantage in exploring such a construct and as Marcus (1995) ventures there are many methodologies applicable. Marcus considers a number of approaches, or 'modes of construction', in developing a multi-sited methodology. He suggests 'follow the people', 'follow the thing', 'follow the metaphor', 'follow the plot, story, allegory', 'follow the life or biography', 'follow the conflict' or 'the strategically situated (single-site) ethnography' - what could be added here is ethnomethodologies. Undoubtedly, there are limits to an ethnographic approach, and in particular a multi-sited one, as Hannerz (2003:208) warns: 'I was in Jerusalem and Johannesburg and Tokyo, and more marginally in several other places, but I was clearly not trying to study the 'entire culture and social life' of these three cities'. Despite this, a multi-sited approach encourages a reflexive

³² Or, as Thrift would suggest, 'belonging-by-assemblage' where these moments produce 'points of emergence' (Thrift 2004b: 96-7).

engagement with relational space as well as the temporality of 'snatching a moment' and, as such, pushes the researcher in the direction of the folds and crevices that are implicit to the assemblage of that moment (Gustavson and Cytrynbaum 2003).

This thesis locates many influences within one moment - the moment when producer and consumer meet at a farmers' market. Much of the materialities, performances, affects and connections explored in the following chapters are grounded in sensory and corporeal entities, which, to say the least, are not materials that are readily quantifiable or tangible. However, as Latham (2003) and Laurier (2001; 2004) would suggest, there are always possibilities in developing concepts and methodologies around such issues. This thesis is certainly not inventive in its methodological outlook but what it does offer is something that suggests an appreciation of those moments that are to be learned 'from'. As stated, the bulk of the work revolves around interviews and observations. Talk and talking, as will be discussed, has its faults, particularly when reduced to text, but it does offer a foothold, or certainly an introduction into farmers' markets and what people do at them. Granted, issues of non-representation and representation cloud how dialogue and discourse can be manipulated or malformed (see Latham 2003; McCormack 2002; Thrift 2000b), but in communicating tangible and useable information, conversation and dialogue offer an opportunity to see and read some of the everyday consumption practices of buying and selling. In essence, understanding, observing and learning is transferred or conveyed in no better way than through talk, be it watching people talk, overhearing them, or being part of a conversation. Of course, there is a distinction here, in that these examples refer to talk in a more natural or practical setting, rather than the foreign or potentially strained environment of an interview.

Representing data or fieldwork has generated debate, and the challenge in many ways is how the 'stuff' that is happening is reported (see Lorimer 2005; Crang 2002). For instance, talking is diverse and multifaceted. It contains many forms, routes and performances and, ultimately, capturing the essence as well as the content of a conversation is difficult. Laurier (1998) attempts to catch some of the subtleties of dialogue or talk, and presents them in the form of a recorded phone message, but even within this rather innovative approach, Laurier's technique has been considered 'staged' (Doel 1998). Part of reporting something like talk or a conversation is the selective nature of what is included and what is excluded. To write a concise piece of work, for

instance for a journal submission, necessitates certain formalities; the article must be within a certain word count, it must have a relatively well-structured argument and so on. In order to conform to such needs, the presentation of ethnomethodological or ethnographic data must be staged and manipulated to some degree. There is always a recurring danger, as Latham (2003: 1999) suggests, that:

The cultural geographer can – it would appear – speak the world of truth through asking her or his research subjects the right questions, and then quoting them back with fidelity in their research reports. (Or, put another way, if we can get our theory representing the world in the right way, we can get our research respondents to as well!)

‘Situated knowledges’ (Latham 2003; Pratt 2000) are difficult to escape from - where the antecedents or trajectory of the researcher’s knowledge fundamentally guide the research process. However, through gaps or fissures (Rose 1997), what can often be exposed is the fragility or fluidity inherent in these knowledges. As Pratt (2000: 642) suggests, ‘reflexive accounts, then, are not ones in which the researcher is firmly located’. In essence, the gap or the rupture is the moment where life happens (Dewsbury 2000), and it is these moments that I suggest highlight the unconscious movements, performances and understandings that engage farmers’ markets. Discussing, researching and observing instances such as unconscious preferences or movements is challenging, for often even the actors involved have difficulty in presenting or explaining ‘what they are doing’. Actors’ judgements and explanations are messy to an extent, because thinking about something like a preference often takes time, and expecting someone to have a definitive answer when asked on the spot during an interview is ambitious. However, one also runs the risk of having a ‘staged’ answer if conducting a second or third interview, and, as such, the fluidity of the first answer does indicate an amount of instinctive or intuitive reasoning. Nonetheless, what this thesis attempts to ‘catch’ by interviewing and observing people at the markets are the rather sensory, emotive, corporeal and social practices that lubricate much of what goes on there. As suggested, this is framed and approached with an ethnomethodological ontology in trying to develop some of these more embodied issues. The following section, gives an indication of the context in which this was attempted and documents the geographic location of the markets as well as the time-frame involved in the research.

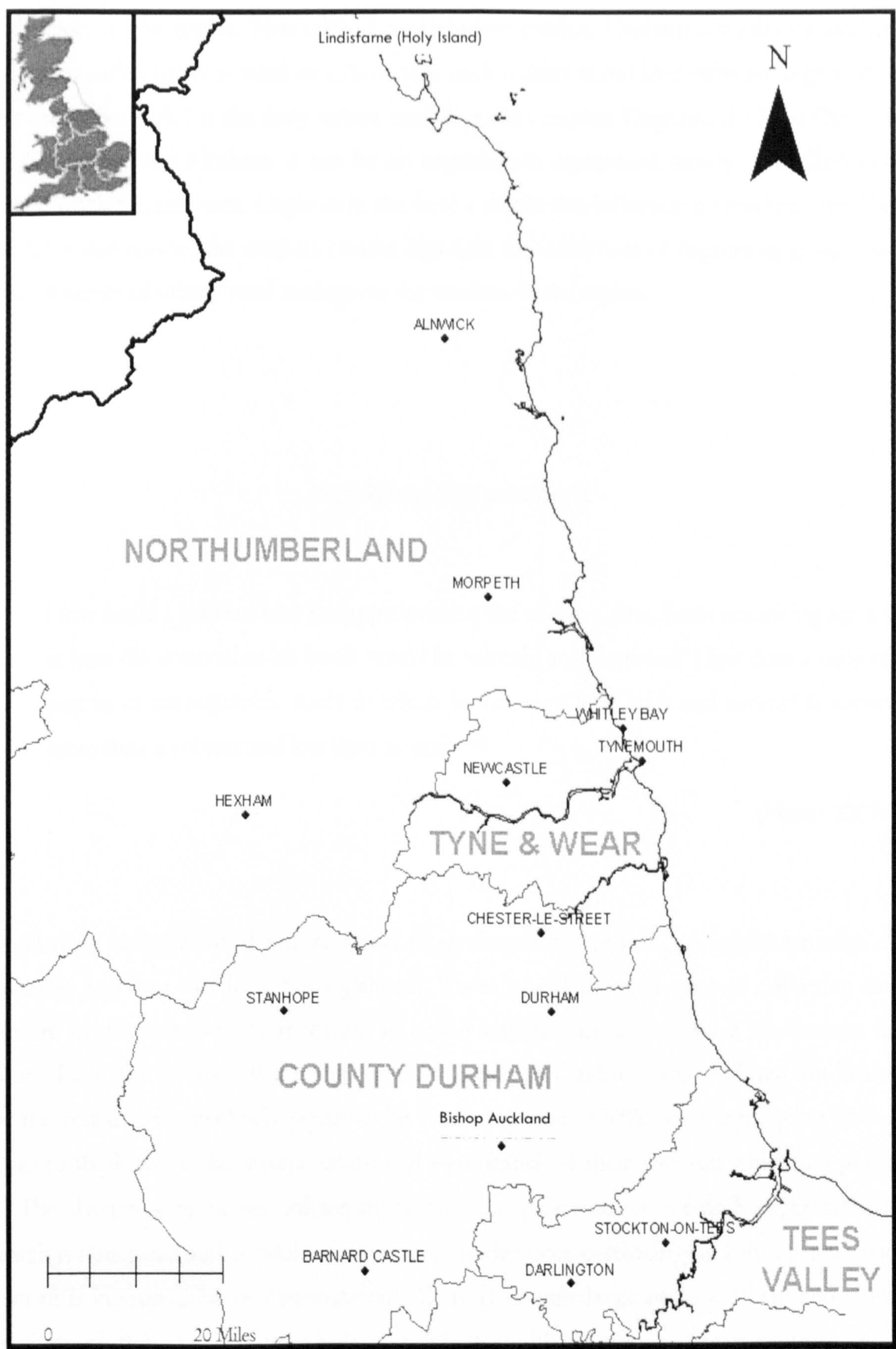
Being there

As mentioned, farmers' markets of late have received a measure of academic attention and, as such, my interests were drawn to much of this work. At the point when the approach to this thesis and the research in general was being formulated, a substantial amount of the UK had been examined in connection with farmers' markets, for instance London, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire (Kirwan 2004), Stratford (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000), the north west (Youngs 2003), the borders of Scotland and England (Ilbery and Maye 2005). There was a distinct neglect of any such attention in the north east of England. By focusing on the north east, it was my intention to offer an embedded perspective to this thesis. Drawing on my lived experiences in the region, as well as of those whom I observed and spoke to, allowed an appreciation of the social context, as well as issues such as knowledge, power or materiality that played out at the market (Tolia-Kelly 2004). There was a steep learning curve in coming to terms with the practices and processes of farmers' markets in the north east, as well as life in general in the region. The region was new to me when I began my research; I had just recently arrived from Ireland and had no previous working experience of farms or farmers or indeed with many rural issues. Picking up the rhythms of the area and its people was fundamental to what I was attempting to achieve at the outset of this thesis, and living in the area allowed access to how some of these rhythms orchestrated routines, paths, routes, networks, practices and interactions (Crang 2001). At the point of beginning research, I knew I wanted to explore some of the corporeal experiences of life at a farmers' market and, as such, reviewing lived experiences necessitates a certain closeness or familiarity with the actors as well as the spaces involved. I began shopping at the markets for groceries on a regular basis and interacting or conversing with producers, all of which helped in producing a more in-depth knowledge of the markets (Stoller 2002). As Simonsen (2005:4) suggests, 'as part of the lived experience, the body constitutes a practico-sensory realm in which space is perceived through smells, tastes, touch and hearing as well as through sight'. 'Being there' gave me a sense of a north east farmers' market.

Fieldwork began in September 2004 with a preliminary study of 14 different markets. It was the intention to explore what was 'out there' and to experience farmers' markets first hand, in order to understand, or at least witness, the social dynamics that were present at farmers' markets. It

was also the intention to speak to producers to get a sense of how they felt about farmers' markets and what they got from the markets, and equally how productive or profitable the markets proved to be for their businesses. Progressively, I started 'hanging out' (Duneier 2001) at the markets and during this time I developed conversations with producers, sketching details of their business histories and development, noting things like how many markets they attended or how long they had traded at farmers' markets. I always identified myself as a university student doing a PhD and although the initial response was often 'Oh no, not another student doing a survey' this subsided with my recurring appearances. Subsequently, my relationships with the producers became somewhat less formal and our conversations would often move from daily news stories, to football, to the markets themselves. When attending the markets I normally observed from a distance noting general flows of consumers and the fluidity and regularity of interaction and transaction. It was only during 'slack' periods that I approached the producers and began conversations. Throughout the 14-month period of the fieldwork, I attempted to travel to each of the selected markets once a month and, in general terms, this was quite successful, but there were occasions when I could not attend. The initial 14 markets that I attended are shown (see Map 1) to give some indication of their spread throughout the region. After my initial fieldwork, the focus was reduced to three markets in order to give a succinct case study of the region.

Map 1: Farmers' Markets attended in the North East



(Source: author 2005)

Durham, Hexham and Newcastle are the markets that this thesis focuses on, chosen for two reasons. Firstly, the contrasting catchments of the markets were significant in representing the full diversity of the region. Newcastle is a city/urban market, Durham a small city market and Hexham a market town or rural area. Secondly, each market is run by a different organisation. A company responsible for the daily indoor market in the city runs Durham, the local City Council runs Newcastle, and Hexham is run by an organisation comprised mostly of stallholders and farmers' market enthusiasts. Organizers can have a distinctive influence on markets (see Chapter 4) and, for this reason, the markets chosen highlight the influences of organising groups, as well as the influence of urban/rural settings on the markets in the region.

Applying the research

How could I prevent him for appropriating me as mere data, from not giving me a voice in how the material in his book would be selected and depicted? How does a subject take part in an ethnographic study in which he has very little faith and survive as something more than a subject and less than an author?

(Hasan 2001: 321)

The dilemma facing most, if not all, social researchers is the framing or (re)presentation of the knowledge and data that have been gathered. There is a plethora of ways of collecting data, as there are in disseminating or reporting it; power and politics are always a component in the process. How, for instance, is the role between researchers and researched played out in view of how the research is eventually going to be read? As Crang (2002: 651) argues, 'no researcher refuses to think about the interpretation and significance of their research while they are doing it'. The dynamics of power inherently tied to the processes of research suggest that how research is structured and conducted warrants consideration, particularly in light of how much of the work is interpretative or observational. There is an imbalance of power here and while the objectivity of this thesis approach is stressed, it could be open to interpretation. In using ethnomethodological appreciations the starting point is the dynamic of the everyday, something

that is forever changing and moving. Interviewees, as much as possible, were encouraged to speak about whatever they wished in an attempt to see where conversations would go or ultimately, to see what they may 'turn up'.

What follows is an outline of how the research was conducted; each point gives a brief summary of the approach and application:

i. Field diary

A journal was kept to note observations, particularly during the first phases of the research. Also included in the journal were musings and thoughts on what was taking place. All journal comments were entered into the journal 'on the spot' or as the thoughts occurred. Documenting initial thoughts in such a way allowed the formulation of subsequent approaches to the markets and in particular, how the notion of assemblage was approached. The knowledges gained through attending the markets posed many questions and solutions with regard to how to approach the research.

ii. Participant observation

Watching and observing consumers and producers at the markets, this was done both from a distance and at close hand – often observing when wandering amongst the stalls or perusing items on display (listening to conversation was often enlightening). Observing from distance allowed for a more expansive or holistic perspective of how people moved throughout the market and some of their behaviours and actions. Applying participant observation made it possible to highlight some of the social intricacies and subtleties in evidence through habituated practices, routines or routes as people bought or sold at the markets.

iii. Survey

Two surveys were conducted during fieldwork, the first one involving producers and the second consumers. For the producer survey, a short questionnaire was conducted (see Figure 1) and every stall approached at all of the 14 markets initially attended (see Figure

2 for an indication of the scale of each market).³³ The information gained gave initial indications as to the produce sold and from where most of the producers travelled.

Figure 1: Producers survey

Business/ stallholder:	Product:
Distance Travelled:	
Sell at other Markets: y / n No.:	Are products seasonal: y / n
Pricing: Determined by costs - y / n Or – being competitive with shops/supermarkets - y / n Or - a balance between the two – y / n	
Number of years selling at a Farmers' Market:	

³³ Also, see Chapter 6, page 167, for a layout of Durham farmers' market – that is, where stalls were positioned at the market, and for an indication of the frequency and extent of consumer footfall.

Figure 2: Number of Stallholders Found at Each Market

Market	Number of Stallholders
Hexham	24
Barnard Castle	22
Morpeth	22
Durham	20
Newcastle	20
Alnwick	16
Tynemouth	15
Darlington	12
Stanhope	12
Lindisfarne	11
Sedgefield	8
Whitley Bay	2 ³⁴
Chester le Street	1
Stockton	0

For the consumer survey, a stall was hired from each of the three farmers’ markets that are the focus of this thesis (Durham, Newcastle and Hexham). An answer-board was devised with five questions, created to give an indication of the products consumers preferred and to gain an understanding of what people liked about the markets, as well as

³⁴ This market ceased shortly after my questionnaire due to lack of participation.

the spread of markets consumers attended and the distances travelled to markets. Each question had a number of possible answer boxes. Consumers had five coloured stickers and had to place the stickers in the corresponding boxes to their answers (see pictures 1 & 2. For a full list of the questions and charted answers, see appendices). The stickers were colour-coded in order to give some indication of the busiest times of day.

Throughout all the surveys, and indeed throughout all the fieldwork, I generally travelled to the various sites of interest (farmers' markets, interview locations, etc) in one of the Durham University Geography Department's cars. The use of these cars was essential in conducting research, as often producer interviews, in particular, were in places only accessible by car. When at the markets I generally wore everyday clothes (for example, jeans, trainers and waterproof jacket – see Picture 2, I am on the left) and did not wear anything identifying myself as a research student. The surveys helped, as I suggest in the aims of this thesis, to engage with methodological innovation and develop an epistemological framework that expands notions of buying food, and understanding the routines and practices the underline such actions. The surveys in many ways enhanced my understanding of the markets, particularly as it allowed an appreciation of what it was like to be an active participant in the markets, and also the surveys facilitated access to amongst other things 'gatekeepers' of the knowledges and experiences of the markets.

Picture 1: Survey stall at Newcastle farmers' market



(Source: author 6/5/05)

Picture 2: Sticking on the answers at Durham farmers' market



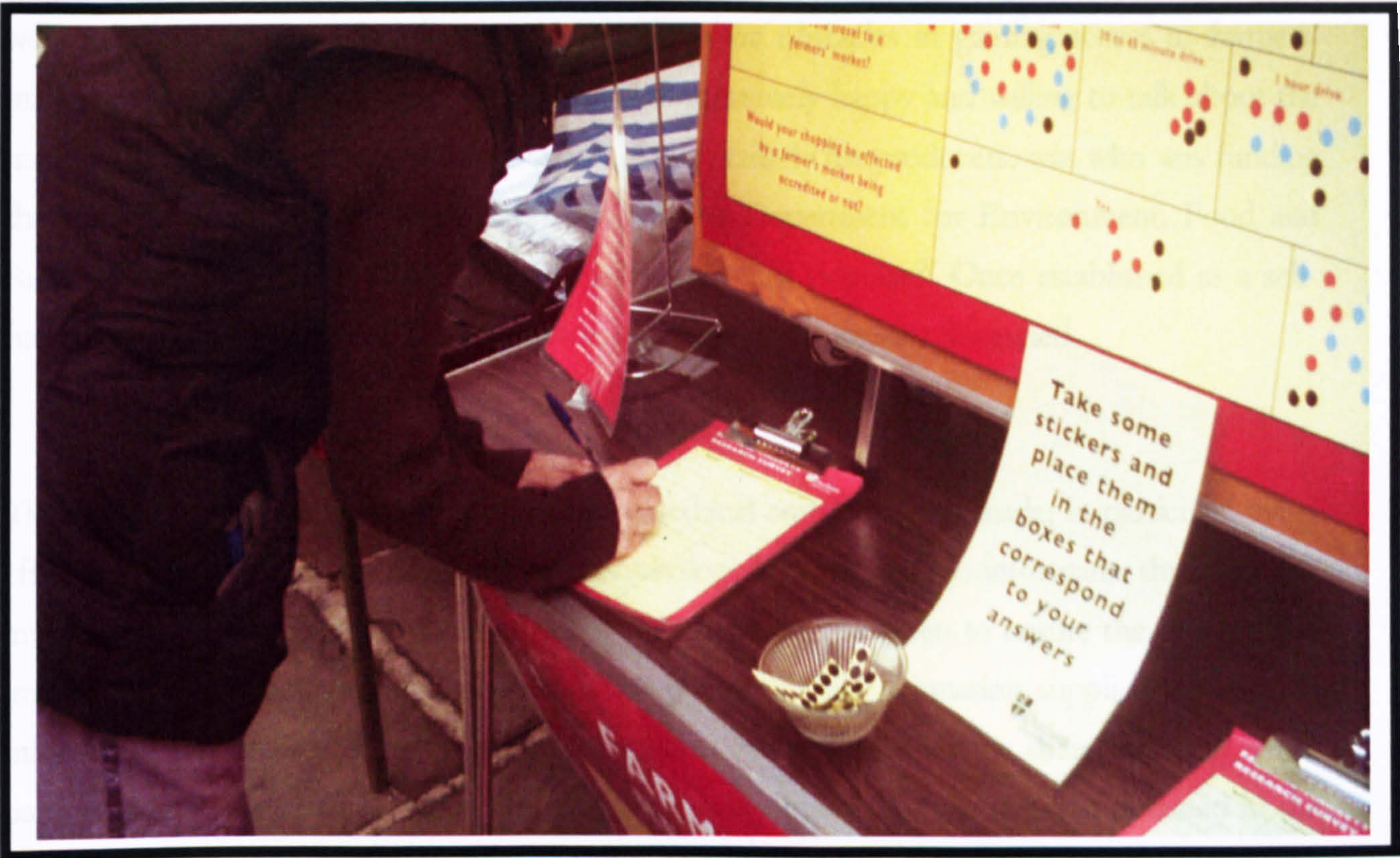
(Source: author 6/5/05)

iv. Semi-structured interviews

I conducted 25 interviews with producers and 38 with consumers. Most of the producer and consumer interviews were conducted in the interviewee's home or at a convenient location (for example a coffee shop or on the farm) and two were conducted and recorded with permission over the telephone. Recruiting producers and consumers for interview was initiated in a number of ways. For producers, I wrote to 60 of them enquiring if they would like to participate in the research and enclosed a pre-paid RSVP card - 25 producers responded positively. For consumers, during the stall survey I asked participants if they would like to be interviewed at a future date and, if so, they were asked to supply an email address and/or telephone number (see Picture 3). Interviews were then arranged via email or telephone.³⁵ The interviews detailed much of the moments of consumption at the markets and gaining first hand knowledges and experiences is the focus of most ethnographically grounded research. The interviews expanded my understanding of the everyday realities and the challenges faced by those who participate in farmers' markets.

³⁵ Those interviewed covered a wide spectrum of ages, occupations and interests, and the gender of the producers and consumers interviewed was relatively evenly balanced (women 33 and men 30) - all interviewees in this thesis remain anonymous.

Picture 3: Signing up at Durham Market



(Source: author 19/5/05)

v. Coding

All of the interviews were transcribed and coded using Atlas ti. The coding process of Atlas ti allowed instant comparisons between interviewees' responses. The transcribed interviews were initially sorted in codes led by the questions that had been asked, for instance, 'how many markets do you attend'. Within each code, there was a further opportunity to filter, for instance, 'how many respondents mentioned Durham farmers' market'. This systematic approach presented a concise amount of transcription in relation to the questions or themes at hand, and presented further threads or potential in analysing the data. Often by comparing answers to one question new and unpredicted themes emerged, which allowed a fuller exploration of some of the opinions and thoughts of those interviewed.

As with most research, there were additional research issues and problems. As has been touched upon, issues of power/politics infringe on research, especially in its representation, but equally

the practicalities of research often have an influence, such as when things do not go to plan.³⁶ For the most part however, the research as a whole went extremely smoothly and research issues were not problematic. I faced no major problems or obstacles in gaining access to farmers' market producers or consumers. Everybody was extremely happy and willing to talk about the markets. The only consistent worry people had, particularly for producers, was who was funding the research and whether the research was for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) - whom it would seem were not popular.³⁷ Once established as a self-funded PhD student with no hidden agenda, any worry or animosity dissipated.

Throughout fieldwork, there were a number of ethical considerations made; in particular, every effort was made that no social, physical or psychological harm came to informants through their involvement in the research and at all times consideration was given to ensure the process and implication of the research on informants was positive. All information supplied by research informants has remained anonymous. Informants were alerted as to their right to refuse participation in the research at any time. Consent was obtained to use material obtained in the research process. The research was as open and honest as possible with research participants fully informed about the purpose, methods, and potential uses of the research. However, the research focus on personal opinions, actions and reactions and the ethnographic and ethnomethodological techniques developed to address these practices, meant that it was not always possible to disclose my 'positionality' as a researcher during the research (for example, when conducting participant observation in public spaces). When other research methods (including in-depth interviews and participant surveys) were used, informed consent was negotiated with participants through a verbal agreement that included information on the aims and objectives of the research, the contact information of the researcher, and the appropriate contact details of the University's Ethical Advisory Committee in case of complaint. The arrangement also included assurances of respect for the privacy and anonymity of all personal information. The research was informed by the professional codes and guidelines for ethics set

³⁶ Things can go wrong during research, although it did not happen during this research, shortcomings such as batteries in the Dictaphone running out during an interview have an effect in, for instance, how that interview is interpreted, understood (or misunderstood) and played out (see Riemann 2005). All of these equations can have an impact on the research. For example, certain subtleties that are present in all other interviews may be missed because this interview was not recorded and, therefore analysis relies on memory and personal reflection of the conversation at hand (Leech and Trotter 2006).

³⁷ 'Officialdom', as one producer termed it, was not welcome as it is seen as interfering and problematic. In general terms, interactions with bodies such as DEFRA usually resulted in what this producer considered to be 'needless hassle and bother' (Interview 10/1/05).

out for social research by the British Sociological Association (BSA) and for ethnographic research by the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA).³⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodological approaches to the fieldwork that informs this thesis have been outlined, with particular attention paid to some of the literature mentioned in Chapter 2. Contextualising fieldwork is necessary to gain a 'lifeworld' perspective, particularly in relation to what has been achieved and applied in the face of other possibilities or scenarios (Marcus 1995). Assemblage accommodates the fracturing and equally homogenising nature of any given social interaction and at farmers' markets there are elements that combine social interaction and those that remain separate or certainly retain the potential of autonomy. The raucous nature of such a composition is problematic in that it is often hard to pin down, and as Laurier and Philo (2006: 356) suggest:

In fact, what we are really suggesting is that on the rough ground of practical life, all kinds of representational and non-representational work are always going on, stumbling along together, mutually supporting one another or perhaps sometimes undermining one another, in a fashion that can (and should) never be sorted out in some neat *a priori* fashion by theorists.

³⁸ With regard to the practice of ethical fieldwork, I want to pose a question that springs from an experience I had at a farmers' market after I had completed my fieldwork. This little anecdote describes how my ethical position presented a quandary of sorts on one occasion. At a market, I was chatting to a pork producer who I knew very well. As the conversation progressed she pointed out to me in a 'nod and wink' manner that there was a new pork producer at the market (this was the new producer's first ever farmers' market as I later found out). The producer I knew then asked would I go and check out the new producer and get one of their price lists – I duly obliged in a fit of camaraderie and an interest to see the new producer. When I returned with the list we ran through the new price list and compared it to the list of the producer I knew. It was only afterwards I thought had I in some way compromised my position as a researcher (even though my fieldwork was complete) or was there some sort of code of ethics threshold I had over-stepped? I am still unsure, in terms of ethics, as to whether anything untoward went on.

What I have attempted to capture during this chapter is a sense of the hum of daily life and how it is possible to link into this, however briefly, and in essence what can be found there. As suggested in the beginning of this chapter fieldwork is just a snippet of peoples' lives and what can be taken from the fieldwork is a sense or appreciation of what people were thinking or how they were acting at the time. The fieldwork is located in its time, and, as such, can only impart so much. In Chapter 4, the thesis begins the empirical analysis of the markets and considers the rationalities, agencies and materialities that enhance appreciations and understanding of farmers' markets.

Chapter 4

The materialities of farmers' markets and the 'stuff' that makes them what they are

It depends on a sensitivity to difference, here and now. Or rather, it depends on a sensitivity to the possibility that social and material relations don't add up. Or hang together as a whole. Semiotically, or strategically which means that they are like a patchwork. That all entities are local. And that what we thought were stabilities are – unstable. What we thought had direction – shakes and quivers.

(Law and Mol 1995: 275)

Chapters 2 and 3 have set out the theoretical and empirical context of this thesis and highlight the focus that may augment the way in which farmers' markets are conceptualized. As Crewe (2000: 275) suggests, geographers have been 'slow to interrogate the ways in which consumer spaces can be at once material sites of commodity exchange and symbolic and metaphoric territories'. A central tenet of this thesis is the consumer/producer nexus and the relations and practices that abound around this; in order to explore such an angle this chapter emphasises the materialities of the markets. Each section of this chapter focuses on one aspect of the markets in

furthering some of the rationalities, agencies and materialities that foster understandings of what a farmers' market is, and how a market is 'played out'. As Mol and Law suggest there is a sensitivity to the patchwork, or as I suggest there is an assemblage to the markets, and, as such, the markets include many things, most notably the materials and agents. This chapter advances the notion of the encounter, or the 'importance of contact' (Valentine 2008: 323), because when producer and consumer interact at the markets there are many components to consider. As Laurier and Philo (2006: 3) suggest:

Considering an actual encounter, event or occasion will seem pointless if we assume that we already know what is represented (*a priori* and reductively) or we accept that imaginary events and places will be sufficient. By imaginary, we mean the 'just so' examples that we sometimes use in discussing and thinking about, for example, what people do in a café.

All kinds of characteristics, presumptions and associated can be involved in any given encounter and in detailing encounters at a farmers' market this thesis highlights the nuances and subtleties of how these are managed, conducted and/or packaged. The encounter is in this instance, is the moment of consumption at the markets and as this chapter suggests an amalgamation of small talk, commerce, food and tactility provide an assemblage/patchwork to such a moment. Encounters at farmers' markets sit within a material framing, as well as in the complex influences of symbolism and actors at the markets and the first half of the chapter concentrates on the structures, influences and orientations that cultivate interaction and action at the markets. The emphasis is on the space of exchange at the markets and how interactions shape and mould space, as well as how spaces shape and mould interactions. The chapter begins by discussing the basic materials of the markets and how a farmers' market actually looks, then considering how the markets are run and their rules, as well as considering some of the more banal materialities which underlie farmers' market encounters. The second half of the chapter looks more intently at the materialities of food – or to use Crewe again, the more 'symbolic and metaphoric' aspects of the markets. Concentrating on some of the many guises of food, the focus is on the malleability of farmers' market food and the role of producers and consumers in making and re-making understandings of the world through engaging with material objects (Jalas 2006).

What is a farmers' market?

FM [farmers' markets] in the UK are specialist markets trading in 'locally produced' products, focusing largely on food (rather than crafts, for example) which is either locally grown or incorporates locally grown ingredients. In effect, FM represent the re-establishment of an old tradition that almost died out in post-war Britain.

(Holloway and Kneafsey 2000: 286)

Farmers' markets usually take place in the central areas of town or cities, such as the market square or a relatively large open area. They are generally conducted outdoors³⁹ and in general, even the smallest markets in the north east comprise 8 stalls or more. The bigger markets house up to 30 stalls.⁴⁰ Stalls are in most cases owned by market organizer/organisations and in place before the arrival of producers. Market layouts or the organisation of a market often employs tacit knowledges or a familiarity with producers, for, by design, similar businesses are situated at suitable distances. For example, two pork producers would not be placed beside one another.⁴¹ There is a degree of fairness to stall distribution at some of the markets, for example, Newcastle farmers' market organizers rotate stall positioning – end and corner stalls tend to attract more attention.

Stalls at the farmers' markets are typically arranged in one of two ways. The first, a square pattern where each stall is part of a perimeter and the front of the stalls face into the central area of the square (see Picture 4). The second, a row effect where the stalls are organised in lines and the purpose is to allow consumers to walk up and down rows with stalls on either side. Stalls consists of a table enclosed by a heavy tarpaulin hung over steel frames, which creates a roof and

³⁹ Durham, Hexham and Newcastle markets are all outdoors.

⁴⁰ Newcastle is the largest market in the NE and it averages about 30 stalls per market.

⁴¹ For a counter argument to spatial analysis, see Haggett (2001). He considers ice-cream vendors on the beach and suggests that the spatiality of the vendors 'patch' corresponds to other vendors. Ice-cream vendors tend to sell where there is a concentration of people and as a result, the vendors also tend to position themselves within one region of the beach. Haggett also suggests there are other circumstances which contribute to the spatial analysis on the beach such as the physical geography, and, as such, farmers' markets differ because unlike the beach, there is a rigid positioning of the market, and its producers and consumers. The markets take place in designated areas, producers are allocated positions within these areas and consumer can only walk amongst the gaps or passageways between stalls that are provided by market organisers (see below).

back to the stall. Most stallholders or producers have their business names displayed on backdrops hung behind the counter. Producers stand behind the stall and conduct their business from there; they are charged between £15 and £25 for attendance – this price is dependent on the market. A number of producers own their own stalls or display units; usually meat producers, and these stalls often contain refrigeration units (see Picture 5). Occasionally stalls are fitted caravans, of the type commonly used as fish and chip vans (see Picture 4, first stall from left). Again, most of these sell meat, or less frequently, fish.

Picture 4: Farmers' market stalls



(Source: author, Darlington Farmers' market 06/09/04)

decommodification (Sayer 2003) at the markets and a celebration of food heterogeneity or, more specifically, a contrast to the food homogeneity at formal retailers such as supermarkets. Supermarkets select, for example, fruit and vegetables in terms of shape and size.⁴³ In contrast, as Roe (2006) argues, there is a material connection between consumers and aesthetics, a connection that is based not on conformity but one on sensation. Equally, as I will argue, there is also an emotive and performative basis in choosing food. Contexts, such as whom the consumer is buying for (Miller 1998) or the performance of the seller (Thrift 2004) can be telling. Roe (2006: 470) continues:

What I wish to pick up about the difficulty in constructing the relation of edibility between some consumers and biotechnological foodstuffs is how the materiality of the foodstuff is understood as transformed, changed, altered. Is a GM carrot brighter in colour? Is it more regular in shape? Does it taste different? These are examples of what consumers may wonder...

Buying a carrot engages aesthetics and awarenesses that for some consumers provide a degree of alterity or a 'decommodifying reaction' (Campbell 2005)⁴⁴ and, as such, afford the meanings and backdrop to their attendance and desire to consume at a farmers' market (see Chapter 5, 6 & 7). Entwined at the market with such considerations is the assemblage of, for example, the products, the displays, the stalls, the weather, the customers and the producers, and there is 'messiness' (see chapter 2) when these materialities blend. Nevertheless, there is a central tenet to much of what goes on at the markets, for without stalls and produce there is no market. The positioning of stalls structure, bound and create farmers' markets, while the produce often provides the draw or motivation. Framing a farmers' market and organising or running the markets is something that involves consideration and, the following section reviews managing a farmers' market and the guidelines that this involves, as well as some of the pitfalls.

⁴³ As mentioned in an interview with a fruit and vegetable producer who at one time supplied a supermarket chain, but now sells exclusively at farmers' markets (10/1/05).

⁴⁴ Interviews: 7/6/05, 28/6/05, 13/7/05.

Picture 6: Packaging and reading sausages; the necessary information



(Source: author 16/02/07)

Rules of farmers' market management

Each of the markets focused on is run by a different organisation (see Chapter 3). Organizers have a distinctive influence on markets. Obviously the smooth running of the market is their responsibility, but equally the goals of the market (whether it is a purely profit making exercise or if there is a more localized or ethical context) and the guarantee of certification from FARMA fall within their remit. In an effort to offer consumers some assurances FARMA have devised a set of criteria that, if followed, allow a market to become certified. As a result, it is the organisers' responsibility to set the rules of the markets and equally, adherence to the rules is their responsibility. Farmers' markets fall into two categories: those certified by FARMA and those that are not. However, these categories are further complicated when markets adopt localized rules alongside those set by FARMA. If there is a clear breach of the FARMA rules then the market is not FARMA certified. Nevertheless, FARMA states (see Rule 6 below) that markets are allowed a degree of lenience when interpreting the rules. However, when markets adopt individualized rules problems accrue, as will be discussed. In addition, some organizers simply do not wish to have their markets certified for various reasons; yet, these markets remain farmers'

markets. Non-certified markets can cause concern. For example, the selling of olives (a product with obvious associations and links to regions outside of the UK) at UK farmers' markets has proved to be particularly controversial (see *The Times* 2005). Nevertheless, when a survey was conducted and asked farmers' market consumers if their shopping is affected by certification, 89% of consumers said no.

Farmers' market certification is dependent on a detailed list of factors and the most important factors are (www.farmersmarkets.net 2006):

1. **Locally Produced**

Only produce from the defined area shall be eligible for sale at a farmers' market. Producers from the area as defined as local must be given preference.

2. **Principal Producer**

The principal producer, a representative directly involved in the production process or a close family member must attend the stall

3. **Primary, own produce**

All produce sold must be, grown, reared, caught by the stallholder within the defined local area.

4. **Secondary, own produce**

All produce must be brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stallholder using at least one ingredient grown or reared within the defined area. The base product should be substantially altered.

5. **Policy and information**

Information should be available to customers at each market about the rules of the market and the product methods of the goods on offer. The market should also publicise the availability of this information

6. **Other rules**

Markets may establish other criteria in addition to the above provided they do not conflict with the core criteria.

These rules, as mentioned, diversify and are also divided into substantial sub-categories, which can cause ambivalent interpretations, evident when two certified markets in the same area insist on what producers (and consumers) often see as conflicting localized rules.

The rules and regulations of the three markets I researched, while comparable, diverge. Durham is lenient on their interpretations of the FARMA rules – as a result, it is not certified. Both Hexham and Newcastle are certified; nevertheless, their rules differ. For example, an animal should have ‘spent at least 50% of its life on the licensee’s land (whether the licensee be the owner-occupier, tenant or licensee of the land)’ (Newcastle 2005, Rule 27(i)).⁴⁵ However, ‘it will be considered appropriate for livestock farmers to finish⁴⁶ beasts bought-in from neighbouring farms using the criteria laid down by FABBL,⁴⁷ 180 days for cattle and 90 days for lamb’ (Foodlinks 2005). This may or may not be 50% of the animal’s life and when ‘neighbouring’ farms cross national borders, as is the case in north Northumberland, this can also lead to complications.⁴⁸ Consequently, because different markets adhere to different rules, signals are ambivalent and producers often become irritated. Their grievances centre on one of two things, either producers who are flouting the rules or the motivations of the market organizers. Several producers freely offered their grievances when I spoke to them – for example, Producer 1 became highly animated when speaking on the subject. He attends markets on a very regular basis and is a lamb producer who attends at least 5 markets per month.

Producer 1: If something is doing well, making a profit, everyone, Joe Bloggs and his sidekicks are on to it... ..everyone wants to spoil things at these farmers’ markets, if someone starts selling lamb, if so and so is selling lamb, Joe Bloggs along the road, I’ll start to sell pork here, and before you know it they are all selling pork, beef, lamb, pies, the whole shooting match. And that’s where it’s all going wrong [be]cause people are taking it from other farms, taking it from wherever.⁴⁹

KS: Because the specific rules of the market, are not being adhered to?

⁴⁵ This is in line with FARMA certification criteria. Neither the Newcastle or FARMA rules mention or make dispensation for activities such as hill farming or transfer patterns.

⁴⁶ Finishing is the process of increasing the animal’s weight prior to slaughter, commonly known as ‘fattening’.

⁴⁷ FABBL is a ‘Qualifying’ scheme for the Red Tractor logo, which means that products from the scheme will be clearly identified to consumers as they carry the distinctive Little Red Tractor.

⁴⁸ The second rule is not included specifically in the Hexham farmers’ market guidelines, but this example illustrates just one of the possible complications that can and often do arise.

⁴⁹ Interview: 11/1/05.

P1: Not as strictly as they should be. They should be, well they're not, we know that for a fact... ..an awful lot of hard work goes into these things and people cheat.... some of them [market organizers] are just happy to take lamb from anywhere, take pigs from anywhere, not necessarily their own. If you want the true version?

KS: Yes, by all means please do.

P1: I'd much rather see everything tightened up... [another producer's name] selling pigs, he hasn't got pigs, we know that for a fact. It's a lovely, lovely thought, it's a lovely thing, these farmers' markets and they could be really good, but like everything in life people want to spoil it and get their cut, always.

Another example is Producer 2: he runs a farm that produces a wide variety of produce, but specializes in pork, and attends 7 markets per month.

Producer 2: It's who runs it, why they run it, how they run it, if they keep it as a pure farmers' market ... what's the rules they keep to, emh, the commitment of the people who are running it makes a massive difference and, some of the council ones are well run, others just a way of taking money in... particularly when they are outsiders doing it, you got to have somebody who is running it who genuinely has a passion for it and really wants it to work.⁵⁰

As these cases illustrate, there are often tensions at farmers' markets between producers, and between producers and organisers. The rule Producer 1 wants to see 'tightened up' refers to the prevention of farmers' market producers buying produce and then re-labelling and selling it as their own, something he claims to have witnessed. Such preventative measures would be extreme and involve thorough checking by organizers at each market, something time does not always allow. The problems and the regulations of the farmers' markets offer views of the material connections and realities that abound at the markets and how these are placed within

⁵⁰ Interview: 11/01/05.

chains of interpretations. Tracing such themes can lead into a dense materiality, where influences and structures house multifarious realities, particularly for the farmers' market actors. Equally, these influences are further complicated by influences often out of the control or remit of farmers' market actors, particularly through a material influence that tends to affect consumers and producers such as passions and tensions revolving around food. Nevertheless, issues such as those mentioned rarely surface during moments of consumption at the markets; instead discussions between producers and consumers tend to revolve around more neutral subjects, and ones conducive to selling produce - of particular interest is often the weather.

Weather

Farmers' markets, given that they are generally outdoor events, are inevitably susceptible to a variety of weather conditions and their consequences. Whether it is a stall canopy blowing away or cheeses melting in the sunshine, the weather affects how people conduct their routines and practices at the markets. The physical attributes of the weather, or expectations of it, play a strong role in how producers and consumers prepare and/or conduct their day at the market. The weather system in the UK is relatively unpredictable or variable (Thornes and Stephenson 2001) in that particular seasons do not necessarily follow predicted weather patterns and, as such, there are certain parallels with consuming at farmers' markets. Consumers at the markets welcome variability in the produce they buy (see Chapters 5 & 6), and the weather patterns at markets, while separate in the sense that they are uncontrollable and absolute, are linked to consumers' behaviours and patterns, so there is, in a sense, a (re)connection to local conditions through the weather. Recent work has looked at the crossover between the weather and consuming patterns. In particular, attention has focused on the weather effects on stock exchange returns or financial securities (Tufan and Hamart 2004; Keef and Roush 2005). Of interest to the commentators is the affect on mood and its implications. As Chang et al (2006: 353) suggest:

Weather is an important factor that may affect human moods, and thus may affect investors' behaviour in the stock market. Overall, we found that temperature has strong

threshold effects on stock market returns, and stock returns tend to be lower when the weather is extremely hot or extremely cold.

Despite this, in financial contexts the weather's unpredictability has been combated somewhat and, as Jane Pollard *et al.* (2006) suggest, some reassurances are forthcoming through weather derivatives. As they suggest these offer protection against, for example, a warm winter and the loss of profits for a soup company. At farmers' markets, no such assurances are forthcoming. Nevertheless, in many ways farmers' markets intensify the links between weather and consumption, most notably because of the vulnerability of the markets to weather conditions. In effect, the weather is the big difference between farmers' markets and other food retail outlets, because the weather has a direct and physical impact on consumers, producers, products and/or cognitive process. Mood is important, because it is susceptible to the influence of the weather and equally, it affects profitability both at farmers' markets and, as Pollard *et al.* suggest, in other forms of retail. At farmers' markets, there is a strong affective or emotive register (Thrift 2004a), where there is an intensity of passion and enthusiasm (see Chapter 5). For many consumers this is a distinguishing characteristic of farmers' markets⁵¹ - along with an element of 'rumpledness' or in a sense a feeling of unpredictability, as produce at a farmers' market is not always guaranteed to be of the same quality or consistency, or even availability, compared to previous visits to the same market. Even so, there is a sense that the produce is superior because of the intensity of passion or feeling (see Chapter 5). In such emotive contexts, mood is a vibrant indicator⁵² and plays a distinct role in rational choice or calculation. The weather, mood and choice become entwined, as Callon and Law (2005: 718) suggest, 'it has often been argued that rational evaluation is inextricably linked with emotions'. Choice invariably complicates moments, and what is suggested here is when the weather and a material object, such as a piece of meat, are brought together at a farmers' market there is a complexity or 'messiness' to the occasion. Rational choice becomes tangled with non-rational choice, or as Callon and Law suggest 'qualculation', in other words those moments of consciousness and unconsciousness that are inextricably linked in any given situation, where an action evolves to become mundane or routine (De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998; Cochoy 2005). Deciding whether to go, muffling up on a cold day before a visit to the market or browsing instead of heading directly to a particular stall are all part of a system of preparation, routine, expectation and/or qualculation. Movement around a market and consumer experience can thus be influenced by weather. Weather patterns

⁵¹ Interviews: 28/5/05, 27/6/05, 8/7/05.

⁵² This is not to discount notions of unconsciousness or routinized shopping (see Chapter 6).

and consuming patterns blend during the moments of a farmers' market and, as such, complicate moments of materiality and moments of agency, creating messiness within how a system operates.

Time

Crucial to considerations of the weather at the markets is time. There is a link in considering how time and the weather play out, and for example, the weather can often dictate how much time, especially for consumers, is spent at a market. Time is a measure that consistently infiltrates the considerations of people's lives; for instance, the markets begin and end at certain times or produce may be sold out after a certain time.⁵³ Farmers' markets operate to a pace, as one producer⁵⁴ elaborates: '9 to 10 that's generally when the OAPs come out, after that it's a bit slower and you get a mix, around 11 it's the younger crowd, students, then from 12 onwards it's office workers, probably on their lunch breaks'. In this manner, there is regulation to how time and the market connect certain predictabilities, but the weather plays a more dramatic link when considered in terms of 'having time' to browse or chat at the markets.

In common with Slow Food Movement initiatives, the ethos of farmers' markets includes a reflexive approach in both choosing and enjoying food. As Parkins (2004: 379) contends in relation to the Slow Food movement:

The politics of slowness and the ethics of time are varyingly addressed in the Slow Food movement which currently remains a site of potential through which members can negotiate their own practices of consumption, including the consumption of time, to develop a 'slow culture' grounded in the pleasures of food.

Time, nevertheless, is something that can often be hindered or encouraged by the weather; for instance, winter conditions are not always conducive to reflection – cold speeds the process of choosing, buying and, indeed, selling⁵⁵ – whereas during warmer months a slower pace abounds,

⁵³ As often happens, many stalls, particularly those with regular customers, sell out by mid-day (see Chapter 6).

⁵⁴ Interview: 12/1/05.

⁵⁵ Producers tend to speed up in how they deal with people, pack produce into carrier bags or generally offer assistance – possibly in order to generate as much heat as possible. Equally, consumers wish to encourage interactions in a speedy manner. Such increases in speed are also exaggerated during busier times such as Christmas. Speed during these busy periods it would seem is of the essence!

temperatures are higher, the comfort of which is seen through peoples' movements and interacts. These conditions are favourable to longer conversations, more thorough examinations of produce and a more reflexive style of shopping. A consumer⁵⁶ expands on the differences between summer and winter at the markets:

... I would buy more in the summer, I'd probably buy things which in the winter I would just walk past with my hood up and you know, freezing cold 'right what do we need? Sausages. Right! Pound of sausages, I'm off, let me get into the warmth'. Whereas in the summer you are strolling around, oh that looks nice doesn't it, a bit of, 'oh ok we'll have that a bit later on' and there is a different atmosphere and so I think people would be more willing to part with their money and to buy non-essentials in the Summer. Maybe that's just me, I don't know, but I think that's how people look at it. ... You pass the time of day more and you can ask people about their business and what have you, whereas in the winter it is much more pure commerce, you know, let me get the hell out of here.

Food when viewed within the context of slowness rather than speed or 'fast food' (see Goldman et al. 2002; Parkins 2004) exemplifies the temporal ordering of materials. For example, how interactions operate at a farmers' market in some ways resists the commodification of time by navigating social practices away from the exchange of time and money to one located in the 'now'. However, even these moments of slowness or speediness are directly influenced by the weather, as the consumer above suggests. Farmers' markets because of the directness of sales are often considered in terms of slow selling, in that producers have time to talk consumers through various components or processes of the production techniques and so on, making the moment pleasurable and conducive to a habitable experience (May and Thrift 2001). Nevertheless, the slowness in some ways can be calculated or opportunistic; as the following producer⁵⁷ suggests, time at a farmers' market can be very informative with regards to 'market research':

You have got to cost your time into that as well if you don't, you are deluding yourself, you know, so yeah, there is a constraint that way [in going to the markets] ... I have been quite surprised by what I would term younger people i.e. people under 30, who are

⁵⁶ Newcastle farmers' market attendee, buys for two (12/07/05).

⁵⁷ A large fruit and vegetable producer, his business deals mostly with a large supermarket. However about 10% of his business is through farmers' markets (19/1/05).

starting to come to the farmers' markets and even children. Families bringing their children, it is becoming more of a social event in that way, because I think a lot of producers are willing not only to talk to whatever age of customer they have but they, you know, they'll involve children. If children want a bite out of an apple or to try a strawberry, you know, you are willing to do that on that close contact. ... you can ask them what they want, I mean that's the nice thing... you're doing market research at the same time as selling. You can get an idea of how much they are prepared to pay for a product, you know they might come up and say, 'oh, how are they this cheap?'. You know, say a punnet of strawberries that they bought in a supermarket 100 yards across the road at twice the money, and then they are going to say, well! And it makes you think, well, perhaps I can put just another 10 pence on that.

Farmers' markets in terms of comparisons to, for example, supermarkets have a different pace, flow and rhythm. The slowness of the markets can be understood in the time taken to talk and aspects of 'time out' – where impressions of rumpledness, ethics, entertainment and/or quality are in contrast to what may be the norm for many food shoppers (Chubb 1998; Friends of the Earth 2000). In essence, taking time to talk at the markets is something appreciated by both producers and consumers⁵⁸ - and, as has been witnessed, what people talk about is very often the weather.

'Lovely day!': The weather, actor networks and small talk

Conversations at farmers' markets often instigate an assemblage of networks, connections, appreciations and commonalities; seldom do the networks that sustain the markets exist without at least a passing comment or social interaction. The weather and discussions of it are a neutral topic in that the risk of offending is low, it is a topic the majority of people in the UK are familiar with and it allows for common ground. The weather is a connectional resource and discussions allow interactions to begin and develop; it is, arguably, a formal or polite manner of UK sociability. Underscored as something that offers little other than 'passing the time of the day', discussions of the weather can envelop most actors into the many networks or connections that abound at farmers' markets. Conversations about the weather lubricate much of the action that is a farmers' market and in effect, many networks and links owe much to the accessibility of

⁵⁸ Interviews: 18/1/05, 28/6/05, 5/7/05.

talking about the weather. Actor networks incorporate object, subject and relations (Murdoch 1998) and the facilitation of such amalgamations is occasionally subtle and easily missed. However, unearthing or exploring such situations presents a practice and representation that highlights the complexity of materials and the discourses that surround as well as enhance the connections and linkages that often follow. Russell Hitchings (2003: 102) goes some way in explaining these links in relation to actors and private gardens:

The actor network approach, therefore, persistently reminds us that the way in which we think about the world is always, to some degree, informed by the capacities and properties of the particular things that surround us in the world. From an actor network vantage the garden could be seen as an ephemeral and precarious outcome whose achievement – both symbolically and materially – is constructed and negotiated through the interactions of different actors.

The agency inherent within farmers' market offers a structure that places an importance on comfortable zones of interaction between actors, and these zones attempt to, as Hitchings would suggest, awaken symbolic and material understandings. Conversations encourage in these situations awareness of familiarity or comfort, as a relatively even plateau is reached where both actors appreciate levels of security about conversation topics and the manner in which the conversation is directed. Farmers' markets provide a moment of contact, however ephemeral, where linkages and associations become assemblages of sorts, in that objects (the commodities) and subjects (the actors) are linked or related through active discourses, actions or routines and practices. Within the context of a UK farmers' market, the etiquette of meeting and greetings is a little ambiguous, in that, unlike, for example, France where greetings are more formal - 'bonjour' or 'bonsoir' followed by 'Monsieur' or 'Madame' - in the UK there is less emphasis on the formal. As a result, the first moments of a greeting can include a variety of approaches and within these a complex path of banality regularly appears and reappears throughout most markets, as both producers and consumers take part in repetitive conversations about the weather - despite its inherently exhaustible qualities as a source of conversation. Producers repeat similar stories to new customers and consumers open new conversations with the same tales of the weather as they approach each new stall. Enlisting the ambiguous qualities of the weather allows discussion, socializing and business to develop. A greeting or some form of salutation establishes contact and is seen as polite and conducive to 'good manners' and good

business practice. Discussing the weather encourages a point of contact and an accessible means of communication, and/or an entry point of participation into a transaction, or indeed an entry point to the networks inhabited by both actors.

The significance of conversation and small talk at a farmers' market is in many ways common to that experienced at other food retail outlets; however, what often distinguishes farmers' markets is the expert or practical knowledge of the producer. As mentioned, the produce on sale should have been made, grown or processed by the person selling it and with this comes something different, a possibility to gain first hand knowledge about production. In many ways there is a unique soundscape here, for unlike supermarkets or other styles of markets (see Gregson and Crewe 1997) there is a genteel and discreet approach to selling (see Chapter 6). Absent are the 'barrow boy' style calls of attraction. Small talk or conversation provides the background noise or the hum of farmers' markets and the focus of these conversations almost invariably begins with issues relating to the weather or the produce on sale. These topics of conversation are a comfortable middle ground and something in which most actors obviously have a common interest, particularly in relation to food.

Small talk in the context of farmers' markets presents two prime experiences. Firstly, it provides an opportunity to engage and secondly, it sets up the turn-taking system of buying and selling (Settemi 1999). The initial function of small talk is to provide a platform to the conversations and the actions that may follow; it provides direction and a role-playing structure to the farmers' market actors. Coupland (2003: 1-2) states that:

... small talk enacts social cohesiveness, reduces inherent threat values of social contact and helps to structure social interaction. Some of the more formulaic aspects of small talk, as often used in service encounters, enable servers and customers to define a mutual non-threatening relationship for the duration of the exchange. In this vein, Scallan referred to a machine metaphor 'for human communication that suggests the machine must be 'humming' if we are not to believe it has broken down'.

This 'hum' of small talk eases the process of conversation and in essence, prevents standing face-to-face in silence - something that can offer its own problems (see Malinowski 1930). Small talk sets in motion a process where both actors establish the pattern in which the transaction will follow, particularly evident when bartering - although bartering tends only to occur amongst producers (see Chapter 7). Typically, within bartering transactions, an offer is made, rejected, remade and then accepted and prior to this, a period of jostling or softening up takes place. This sparring is exemplified by small talk where the pattern of role-playing is set. Settineri (1999) examines Sicilian shopkeepers and their customers, and suggest that there are three phases; an initial phase, central phase and a closing phase in conducting business. The central phase and closing phase focus on the object to hand and the finalization of the transaction, but the initial phase, which is relevant to the farmers' markets and talk of the weather, Settineri (1999: 173) describes as follows:

The opening phase usually consists of greetings (e.g. ciao 'hello' and buon giorno 'good morning') and aims at defining the roles of the participants (customer-shopkeeper), establishing the relationship between them (e.g. do they already know each other or is it the first time they meet?), and showing the way participants set up the turn taking sequence.

After initial greetings, discussions of the weather are introduced into the small talk or on occasion at the very end of the interaction. In the first instance, the weather concentrates the conversation, suggesting 'I am the customer, you are now dealing with me'. Whereas, small talk after the transaction is a way of intensifying the connection and strives to suggest 'I will be back, remember me'. The second situation would then eradicate or certainly smooth the next transaction between the actors, in that the customer can claim, 'I have been here, I know the ropes' and skips as Settineri notes 'do we already know each other or not'. Small talk and conversation are the vehicles of transactions at the markets and their role offers a pathway in understanding the practices and roles of some of these interactions. For some, markets are a relatively new phenomenon and learning how to shop and consume at a farmers' market is a learned process, slightly different to that of buying at a supermarket or corner shop (see Chapter 5). Moreover, within such a process small talk, and indeed some of the other materialities mentioned, formulate approaches and understandings about food at farmers' market, and how to

buy food there – as well as about the weather! Food and its materiality play a distinct role in small talk and at the markets in general; the chapter now turns to food in developing how this materiality is played out.

Food and its materiality

... the commodity is not one kind of thing ... but one phase in the life of some things.

(Appadurai 1986: 17)

Food is a necessity and is read, bought and sold as a commodity. As Jackson (2004) notes, the person who encounters, makes or uses food can dramatically enhance or detract from a food's desirability, or its unattractiveness. The significance of how we interpret and evaluate food is discussed subsequently, after expanding on the materiality of food. Food and its consumption is relatively objective. As Probyn (1999: 216) suggests in reference to Simmel's work, even when eaten food and its consumer remain relatively removed:

Simmel writes that 'what the individual eats, no one else can eat under any circumstance'. By this rather strange statement, Simmel gestures to what we might call the brute physicality of food: as the morsel is going down on its route to digestion and finally defecation you cannot be anything more than a witness.

There is a transaction here, where calories, nutrients, and other material transfer from foodstuff to eater and thus satisfy the motivating factors of the eater. Food is relatively ephemeral in that, as Probyn suggests, hosting food is immediate. Yet, despite this food enjoys immense attention, undoubtedly because of the frequency of its interaction with its consumer; it is a life force and a daily consideration for most living things. From waking in the morning and throughout the average day, food helps to structure most people's lives in that it sets times which correspond with food intake. As Pavlov's dogs might attest, conditioning a desire and anticipation has a physiological impact (Logue 2004). Moreover, what is integral to the meal is the selection and understandings of what the food to be eaten is, what it will taste like and how it is to be cooked.

Food fundamentally corners our imaginations (or lack of) through how it is appreciated and the role it plays in our lives. As Simmel (1994: 346) states:

... of everything that people have in common, the most common is that they must eat and drink. It is precisely this which is, oddly enough, the most egoistic, and the most unconditionally and most immediately linked to each individual.

The material significance of food is primarily understood for what it can give and to a lesser extent for what it is. A red apple may appear tempting firstly, because of its expected taste and secondly, because of what it is and/or its appearance. As Roe (2006a: 216) explains:

Things become food through how they are handled by humans, not by how they are described and named. Attending to what people say about foodstuff is only half of the story about how things become food. The second half is what people do with the material foodstuff.

How food looks, how it tastes, how it is grown, how it is cooked all convey perceptions and conceptions relating to how food and the materiality of that food instruct and inform the networks and associations around that specific material. As Law and Mol state, 'materials are interactively constituted; out-side their interactions they have no existence, no reality' (1995: 227). Engaging with food provides a materiality that combines practical and aesthetic reasoning, and these are the foundation to how food is viewed and used. Food in isolation presents none of these considerations, however much necessity and demand heighten this mere object to something of material consequence. How we interact with food guides our understandings of it.

Significant to such thoughts is the engagement of the senses, for how food is encountered often relies upon sensorial clues. Different to conventional shopping are the sociabilities and materialities of farmers' markets; for example, there is a tangibility at the markets that includes knowledges of how a beast/meat has been reared, fed and slaughtered and this can be represented in the interaction between consumer and producer. The producers possess first hand and sensate knowledges of the textures, colours and sounds of the farm shed or slaughterhouse which underlie their identity, presentation and/or authenticity for many consumers.⁵⁹ The

⁵⁹ Interviews: 1/7/05, 13/7/05, 29/7/05

senoria (hearing, taste, vision, touch and smell) lend depths of perception to skills, such as estimating, evaluating and/or choosing (Stoller 1997) and in relation to food at farmers' markets, the senses are vital, for example, when a producer decides which meat is ready to be sold or which breed of pig makes their best sausages. In addition, for consumers, there is sensorial engagement in standing elbow to elbow at a stall and participating in the hustle and bustle of a farmers' market. Each sense creates its own impulse but collectively they provide the physicality and experience of the markets. Thus, to attend a market there is an engagement of the senses, for instance, buying outdoors, tasting produce before purchase, the smell of produce as the 'tasters' are cooked, viewing pictures of animals that are now for sale as meat (see Chapter 7) and so on. Some of these senses are not unique to farmers' markets, but in terms of the whole 'package' there are few processes of consumption that engage sensate knowledges like the markets: for example, seeing a picture of a pig alive, seeing it as a sausage, smelling the sausage cooking and sampling the sausage. Exploring the senses and farmers' markets provides an opportunity to expand on ethnographic literature (see Chapter 2) and spatial impacts or how place is sensed (Feld 1996); it thus makes possible a more relational approach between materiality, space and agency. As Howes (2006: 164) suggests;

...while the notion of 'the unity of the senses' is a helpful point of departure, and certainly more culturally sensitive than 'the model of text' or 'score', more attention needs to be paid to such issues as: (1) the weight or value attached to each of the modalities, instead of assuming equality and interchangeability; (2) the sequencing of perceptions, instead of assuming simultaneity; and (3) the way the use of different senses may give rise to different meanings, instead of assuming redundancy.

Recognizing 'interchangeability' highlights the hierarchy or ordered applications of the sense, in that for one person why they attend a market is to buy products of a particular taste, for somebody else it may be the vision or sights of the market. In this way, each of the senses tells its own story and provides its own scape – for instance, sound-scape, smell-scape, haptic-scape, and so on (see Rodaway 1994). All are compatible with the physicality of the markets. For example, the sound-scapes of a market may include small talk and conversation, the noise of passing traffic, the clickity-clack of feet on the pavement, the sound of stall covers blowing in the wind or the sound of a nearby church bell (Thompson 2004). Equally, smell is pertinent to the markets, as aromas waft and disperse throughout the farmers' markets and form their own impacts, impulse or impressions. The senses are in many ways indistinguishable and are forever

blending and mingling (Serres 2006). However, two senses in particular - touch (following section) and taste (chapter 5) - detail the impacts of the senses at farmers' markets. These are the senses that emerge from the fieldwork most frequently, especially when both producers and consumers describe the physicality of farmers' markets.⁶⁰ Animating the sensualities of the market is a difficult concept on which to be succinct because of the harmonizing effect of the senses. As Stoller (1989: 32) contends, 'writers of tasteful ethnographies mix an assortment of ingredients – dialogue, description, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, smells, sights, and sounds – to create a narrative that savors the world' (sic). Nevertheless, the senses offer a window into life at farmers' markets and, viewed through the ethnographic moment, introduce a snapshot of many dimensions (Howes 2006).

Tactility

Food offers a multi-sensory approach in how it is viewed, used and appreciated. From choosing a food product to consuming it, farmers' market actors activate a sensory register because they process information regarding that product. For instance, its look or its weight provide clues as to how the produce is or will be appreciated and effectively registers the potential symbolic and material qualities that a product may possess. How a potato will peel, to the amount of muck on a parsnip can, and often does, sway actors through how they handle and view a product. Inherent to buying most foods, especially those that need to be selected from a full display, is the practice of how the food feels in the hand. The texture of food allows an amount of intimacy, food can be judged or estimated and as Navarini et al. (2004: 527) suggest, 'the composite of the structural elements of the food and the manner in which it registers with the physiological senses' combine in creating perceptions and affects (Cantin and Dube 1999) (see Chapter 5). Textural perception is important for sensory engagement. For example, it may help in the identification of a particular food or how the taste of food is described (Wilkinson et al. 2000), and at the moment of choice the clues of sight and touch (and to a lesser extent smell⁶¹) deliver textural impressions. Roe (2006:467) describes the aesthetic and haptic nature of such activities as:

⁶⁰ For example, interviews: 11/1/05, 19/1/05, 29/6/05, 14/7/05.

⁶¹ Smell of course can also be a major influence in choice, particularly at the markets where food is cooked at stalls and aromas waft. Nonetheless, for vegetables and shrink-wrapped meats smell is almost non-existent, therefore reducing its impact on choice and selection.

The practical aesthetic is at work in the handling of a carrot – how it feels, its size, its texture, its colour, how it is used in cooking; these practices form an aesthetic sense of beauty imbued in the carrot: instead it is about the creative energies, the tacit knowledges and the skills that spring from practical involvement with the carrot.

Aside from aesthetics, which undoubtedly influence selection, a more coherent indicator is how a tactile or haptic evaluation lends itself to the action. Examining an item is usually the last step before buying and short of tasting is the best corporal indicator. Arms, hands and fingers are employed in estimating the quantity, constancy, firmness, ripeness, staleness or bloodiness of what is to be bought at a farmers' market stall.

Relying upon touch as the final act is, as Rodaway (1994) describes a process of 'reach-touch', an exploratory action that offers an appraisal and communication through a simple contact. In picking up some produce at a farmers' market a consumer indicates to the producer they are interested and may or may not need attention, but certainly conveys an active interest. Reach-touch for a consumer standing in front of a stall detracts from 'just looking'; the act takes on significance in that it is the next step in the role of purchase. Needless to say, reaching and touching does not equate to a purchase, as selection is still active in these moments; however, it does strongly suggest a purchase is imminent. Important is the responsiveness of the object to the purchaser's attention, for how the object reacts to the touch decides its fate; whether the size is adequate, or the object is firm, a touch can satisfy most potential consumers. As Rodaway suggests, 'touch is above all the most intimate sense limited by the reach of the body, and it is the most reciprocal of the senses, for to touch is always to be touched' (1994: 41). At farmers' markets, communicating and evaluating meanings and understandings of flavours and/or textures are engaged through the haptic processes of the skin, which serves as the corporal sensor in deliberating cognitive reasoning. Choosing to purchase is an embodied sensation where many clues arouse or displace interest, as previous experiences negotiate appreciations and musings, and while smell provides clues, as does taste – especially when samples are offered – the sense that offers the most consistent evaluation is tactility. Whether it is because of ease of access to a product, as most items are on the stalls and are situated between producer and consumer - as compared to say a supermarket where fresh meat is behind a counter and is rarely touched or physically examined before selection – or whether farmers' market consumers are reflexive is difficult to surmise. However, in evidence at the markets is the 'hands on' approach

adopted by the majority of consumers. Equally, producers are considerably hands on, because they have grown or produced the food, something that generates its own tactile appreciations. In essence, the labour intensive processes or actually being present through all stages of production offer its own tactile register and one that is possibly reflected in evaluations of the product.

Food[h]as currency

Food travels through a number of formalities, changes or symbolisms. It presents degrees of transference through its movements from source to kitchen table and within these movements, a torrent of flows and connections guide the appeal, taste, appearance, application or composition of food. Often what leaves a farm is something very different to what a consumer cooks or eats. In some mode or form all food undergoes transformations as movements along varied commodity chains imprint elements that consumers view as integral to the food they are consuming. Fundamental to the structuring of these processes is the organisation of the practices at hand, the mechanics of where food originates from and where it ends up. For many, such considerations are secondary and superfluous as to why they buy food.⁶² However, for those at farmers' markets the mechanics count as something exceptional, something that adds to the produce, often simply because it is produced in a particular manner.

The flows and connections that heighten these evaluations are loosely based around issues such as localism and organic and/or alternative food networks and these add a currency to the food on sale at farmers' markets. The currency culminates in certain foods being valued not solely for their innate qualities, but for qualities that have been added (or in the case of farmers' markets not added). For example, organic vegetables grown with little or no pesticides gain extra currency as a commodity in the eyes of some farmers' market producers or consumers (see Makatouni 2002; Moore 2006). The practices involved in buying, selling, producing and consuming these foods are processes that are considered relatively exceptional or different to the more standardized perceptions and means of producing and consuming food. The difference at many markets wholly reflects a tangible movement away from industrialised means of production. As Murdoch and Miele (2004: 161) suggest, citing Beck, in relation to distance from mass-production:

⁶² Cost obviously plays a large role for many consumers.

Beck suggests that in this uncertain consumption context, many consumers become more 'reflexive' in their relationships with food and other commodities: goods that were once taken for granted are now subject to critical distancing.

Farmers' markets offer alternatives to industrialized foods and thus the currency of the markets fulfils distinct criteria, and in many ways, a farmers' market commodity has purchase. The advantage it captures, for the reflexive food shopper and seller, is an amalgamation of quality and health benefits, as compared to mass-produced food (Kneafsey et al. 2004). Of course, these views are open to personal opinions and taste – and on occasion government ministers' opinions.⁶³ However, the champions of farmers' markets food have a relatively strong lobby and one of its most robust supporters has been a coterie of media friendly food critics and chefs. The emphasis placed on localized, healthy food by some media representatives has undoubtedly raised awareness of farmers' markets and farmers' market food (for example, BBC Radio Food and Farming Awards, Rick Stein's Food Heroes, Matthew Fort's weekly Guardian column 'Around Britain with a fork'). As a beef farmer⁶⁴ argues:

...they [consumers] are quite influenced by the television programmes and the colour supplements, you can get. You get people asking for the same thing, and you say why you are all asking for that this week, when they didn't all ask for that last week and of course it's something they have come across... ..I mean Jamie Oliver did something on one of his shows and the next week everyone was wanting to do it... ..

The media in terms of affecting choices and decisions have influenced how people consider farmers' market food. Similarly, box schemes, farm shops and the like have also enjoyed media support, but it is the raised awareness generated by such channels that help to cultivate a new currency of food. For farmers' market consumers, food and a trip to the market epitomize food not as a simple means of sustenance but as something more, an entity that can be appreciated for how it is grown, tastes, its quality or simply the advantages of buying alternatives to mass produced food. What ultimately adds agency or value to the product is a currency in the flows and connections that surround food, its manufacture and its consumption. Through the

⁶³ See 'Organic food is no better, says minister', Sunday Times (front page) (7-1-07).

⁶⁴ Interview: 24/01/05.

organisation of practices around food as a commodity, farmers' market food offers a distinctive vibrancy for many consumers and gains value.

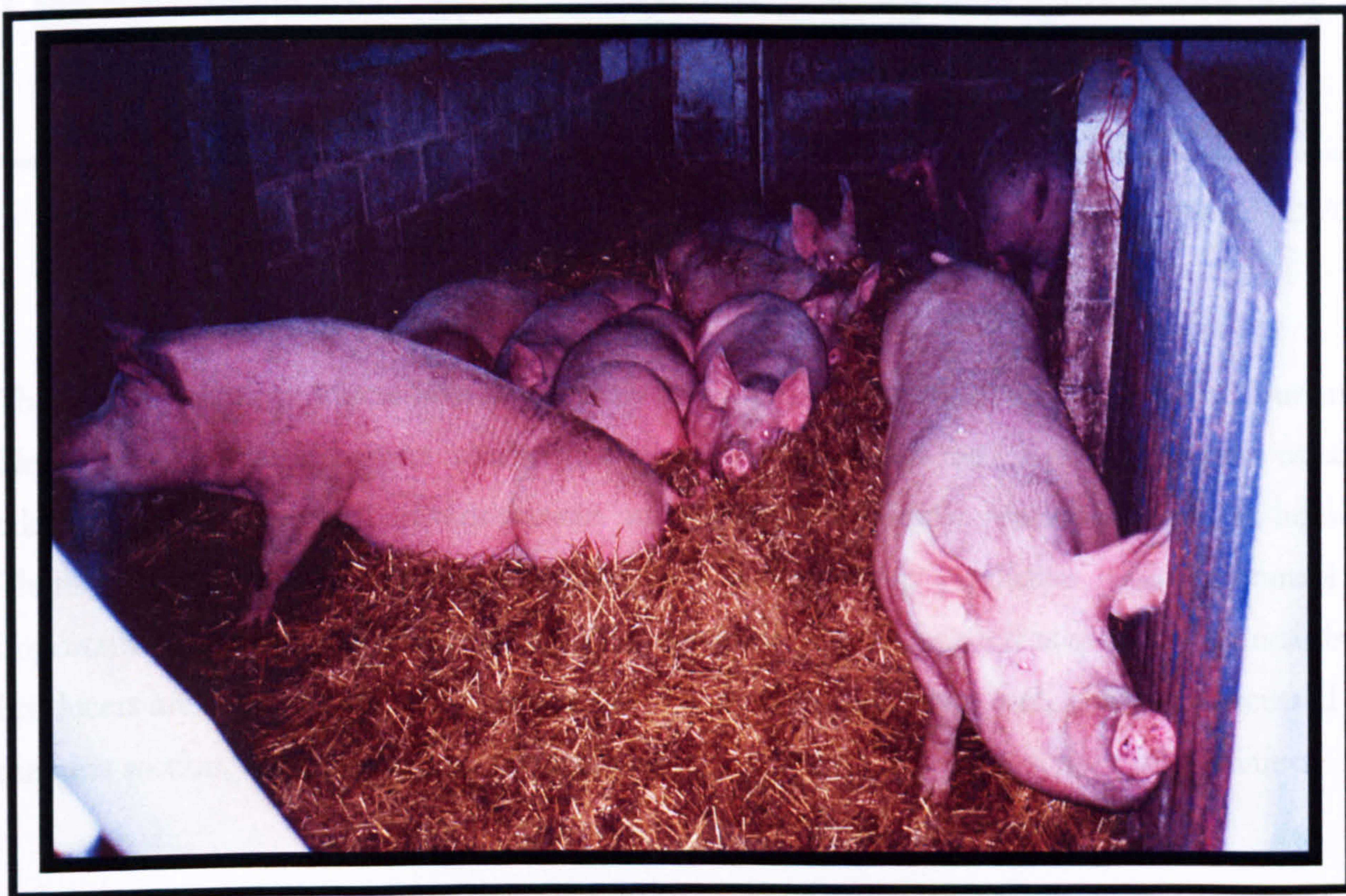
Journey to the market

Tracing food from its source to the moment of its consumption offers numerous stories and subplots, as each product possesses varying twists and turns in its journey to the kitchen/dining room table. However, to give some indication of the chains or connections at play, it may be valuable to trace one product's journey to the market. The product in question is pork sausages, the producers of which run a medium sized farm (by North East standards). The couple who run the farm are not originally from the area, but do have agricultural backgrounds. The farm is situated 15 miles from Durham and it concentrates on pig farming; all the pigs are 'home reared'. It featured in a Channel 5 reality show in 2004, in which two socialite girls lived on the farm for a week. Thus, in the television producer's eyes, this is a somewhat typical pig farm (or it could be argued that the farmers are PR savvy!). The farm itself is indeed almost stereotypical, located off a main road, down a long lane, consisting of a homestead or farmhouse where the family live (with their two sons) and a large industrialized shed, which houses a number of pig pens. The business specializes in pork products, of which there are two distinct sides: specialist sausages and dry cured pork. Products include dry cured bacon, dry cured gammon hams, oak smoked ham, pork joints, chops and so on, and the sausage range includes a variety of at least 20 flavours, which are often seasonal. Both styles of product are entered into annual competitions and have enjoyed high levels of success. The business runs roughly 80% of its produce through farmers' markets and the remaining 20% through farm shops.

Tracing the usual chain of events leading to a farmers' market begins with the breeding of the pigs; all the pigs are reared on the farm and they hold a number of breeding sows at any given time. Each set of new piglets then follows a set pattern of age specific pigpens in the sheds. As the piglets grow, they move to new pens, making room for younger or recently born piglets. At the top of this chain, pens hold pigs ready for slaughter (see Picture 7). The pens can house over 100 pigs and they are fed on a range of cereals, which, seemingly, has a deep impact on the quality and taste of the meat. The productive side of the business is generally in-house, where a substantial investment has been made in machinery, most notably a vacuum packer and a

sausage-making machine. These are based in a building to the side of the house, where the meat is processed in preparation for the markets (see Picture 8). Prior to processing, the pigs are slaughtered in Whitley Bay, the only abattoir in the vicinity. From here, the meat is returned to the farm, where it is hung. Productivity is related to demand, as meat is prepared with the knowledge of what markets are upcoming in the weeks post-slaughter, forward planning is necessary in calculating quantities to be processed. Once the meat has been labelled and packed, it is ready for sale and is then transported to the markets.

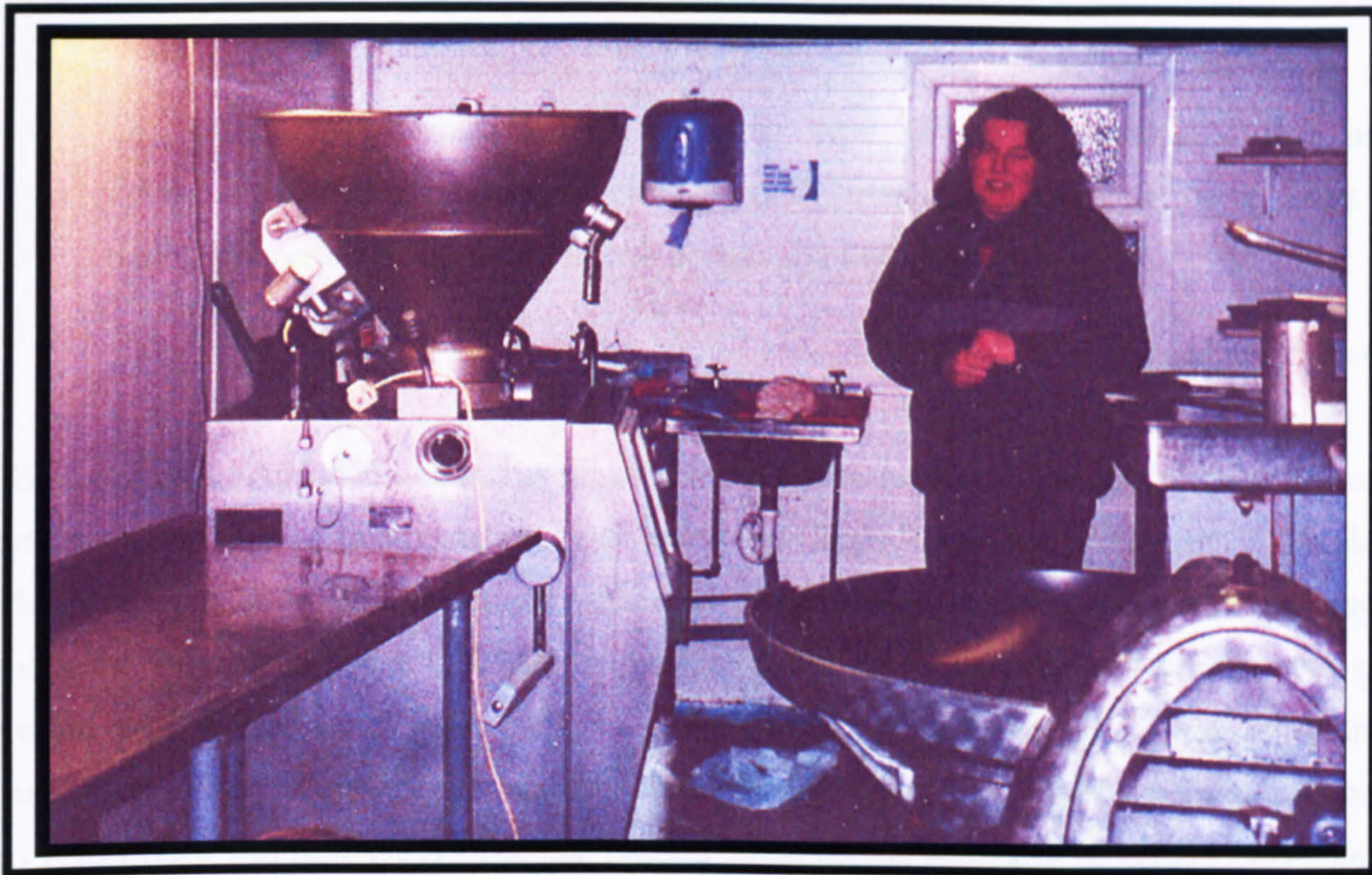
Picture 7: Pigs in Pens



(Source: author, taken at pork producers 26/01/05)



Picture 8: Processing and Preparation Room



(Source: author, taken at pork producers 26/01/05)

The journey these products take is relatively common, in that most produce sold at Durham, Hexham or Newcastle farmers' markets are processed 'on-site' at the farms. The process usually takes place in converted barns/outhouses and, as such, the whole process remains 'in-house'. There is an element of control guaranteed here and for many producers retaining control is important – it ensures the minimization of compromise with issues such as quality or standards.⁶⁵ Producers are acutely aware of the commodity value of their produce and, as will be discussed in the next section, commodification of farmers' markets plays a deep role in their materialities.

⁶⁵ Interviews: 16/1/05, 24/1/05.

Farmers' markets as a commodity

Commodities are things with a particular type of social potential ...they are distinguishable from 'products', 'object', 'goods', 'artefacts', and other sorts of things – but only in certain respects and from a certain point of view.

(Appadurai 1986: 6)

Commodities, as Appadurai hints, have lives and their movements, chains and/or value gesture towards a narrative of fragmentation or diversity. For Appadurai, and as Castree (2004) also adds, the appreciations of a commodity inherently acknowledge its worth in terms of exchange and value. However, Castree (2004: 25) is quick to point out, '...objects do not, of course, go around with definitions of what they 'really are' imprinted upon them'. Commodities, and particularly those that have been invested with degrees of agency – for an object on its own has no reality (Law and Mol 1995) - become fixtures when certain situations or certain evaluations are appreciated, particularly in everyday situations. In all but a few situations, value and exchange are never far from the surface, as objects become 'something more', something influenced by the broad-brush strokes of politics – for instance, how they are defined or assigned a name (Appadurai 1986, Castree 2004). As Appadurai (1986: 27) explains, 'politics (in the broad sense of relations, assumptions and connections pertaining to power) is what links value and exchange in the social life of commodities'.

Within a commodity and especially within its exchange potential, is the deliberation of what it is and how it is appreciated. Furthermore, aspirations or realizations of 'specialness' contribute to the political push and pull of a commodity, where a commodity sits in what Thrift (2004a) might describe as an affective register (see Chapter 5). Transforming a commodity from an object to something with a 'reality' embodies the components of exchange and value and, as such, transformations often encounter inconsistencies and difficulties (Jackson 2002; Castree 2003). Indeed, the commodification process lends itself to the problem, as Jackson (1999) describes how a commodity is moved/encountered/used. For example, soil on a potato for one person may be attractive, authentic even, or possibly organic; for another it is unattractive or problematic because the potato will need to be cleaned prior to consumption. In such ways,

commodities inherit properties that both embellish and disenfranchise simultaneously - categorically reading the process is complicated, yet processes and appreciations do congregate within applicable ranges. The common range for a potato at a farmers' market is somewhere in between the extremes mentioned. While people acknowledge both practical and aesthetic shortcomings or benefits of a muddy potato, most farmers' market patrons would not be too concerned - in a different context, such as a supermarket, the range would be somewhat different.⁶⁶

Contemplating the flexibility of commodities and process of commodification brings us back to the marketing and branding of farmers' markets as a commodity. While not distinctly obvious (individual markets rarely promote themselves as a brand), farmers' markets as a nationwide collective assume qualities and assurances that certainly lend themselves to a particular ethos comprehended within many UK households.⁶⁷ For instance, most British people are conscious of farmers' markets; they have possibly attended one or been exposed to some of the media attention that farmers' markets have received over the past number of years. There is an unequivocal realization of what a farmers' market consists of, what farmers' markets stand for, and what they sell. Grounded in such appreciations are the fundamental elements of value and exchange. If a UK consumer has an interest in food, one would expect they had an awareness of farmers' markets. To take one example, media coverage in general terms is positive towards farmers' markets (see <http://www.qype.co.uk/place/54566-Farmers-Market-Edinburgh>). Built within the spectrum of the media is a knowledge located in value - the product is healthy, good quality, local and the consumer becomes 'empowered' and 'fulfilled'. As one blogger suggests, 'For anyone tired of pushing a trolley full of the same old stuff up and down long, strip-lit aisles, they're [farmers' markets] a breath of fresh air. The outdoor market vibe is uplifting, and the atmosphere is sociable' (<http://www.viewlondon.co.uk/restaurants/london-farmers-markets-feature-1997.html>). The farmers' market as a concept is sold as something good and beneficial; the market is where one can meet people and chat to producers, and within this assemblage is a reinforcement of the message that a farmers' market is 'X, Y & Z'. The X, Y and Z are the

⁶⁶ Supermarkets also sell 'mucky' potatoes, but demonstrated with this example is the different perceptions entwined with a particular commodity. Equally the range of potatoes at a farmers' market do differ to supermarkets; for example, a producer at Hexham specializes in 'antique potatoes' - these are grades or types of potato that are no longer commonly sold.

⁶⁷ This statement is based on the popularity and ubiquity of farmers' markets in the UK (roughly 500 markets per month (FARMA)). However, to give this number some perspective, there are 99,134 grocery stores in the UK - defined as convenience stores, supermarkets or superstores (Food and Grocery Information, www.igd.com 12/8/07).

personal and ambiguous ingredients that ultimately deliver special or unique values to those who attend markets. This style of suggestive presence mirrors many of the marketing tools employed within advertising and, in essence, supports a view of farmers' market as a commodity, or certainly as one that shares many similarities with the patterns and processes of commodification. The markets are commodified as X, Y and Z because they are saturated in commodity status and a symbolic culturalization; as Holloway (2002: 71) suggests, in relation to niche market foods, "quality' and 'locality' become commodified as value is added to products'. For example, an important component of the farmers' market potato is often exactly just that: it is from the farmers' market. The potato's status or symbolism intensifies due to its place of purchase. As Castree (2004: 27) states, it is not always what is saleable that makes a commodity a commodity:

It is wrong ... to assume that the material entities that happen to be commodified in any given situation - be they things, people, ideas or what have you - are indifferent to the commodification process, however that it is defined. As Nigel Thrift observes, 'not all commodities are equal'. For instance, if commodification entails selling something that was previously unsaleable among a certain group - like a whole person or the atmosphere - then it would have very different effects on those things than a situation where commodification meant putting a price on something yet without selling it physically.

Farmers' markets are not bought and sold; their atmosphere is not bought and sold, yet the market and atmosphere play a role in the evaluation and exchange of a farmers' market product. This is not to discount the agency of the actual farmer. In many ways the markets commodify the sense of the farmer and equally the farmers commodify themselves as a unique and different retail experience, for both components make the markets and equally make the product. Farmers' markets add saleability to products and farmers' market products embody the 'specialization' that the markets afford, for, as stated, they are different and offer something unique to many consumers and producers as compared to other means of food production and food sales. The kudos accentuated by a product associated with farmers' markets offers a label, a brand or a package that is in itself a commodity. As Castree (2004) suggests, this is not for sale physically; for sale are the presentation, representation and components that are embodied under the umbrella of the markets. These influences add to the story, the life, the movement, the

encounter and the use of farmers' market produce. For instance, the farmers' market potato emerges with accentuated claims, but claims made normative through understandings squeezed and cajoled through the farmers' market narrative. Recently, however, the authenticity of farmers' market produce has been challenged with an amount of bad press, for example 'Revealed: How Farmers' markets Sell 'Supermarket' Foods. They were supposed to put integrity back into the food chain but not all farmers' markets are what they seem' (The Sunday Times 7/1/07). Despite this, those who attend, in general, hold them in high esteem,⁶⁸ and these understandings can be furthered and sustained through the packaging of the markets.

Packaging farmers' markets

A product by its association with a farmers' market is recognised as having certain potential.⁶⁹ What is important is how some of that potential manifests itself, particularly in the semiological clues at the markets. As Barthes (1964: 17) suggests, 'the sign-function therefore has (probably) an anthropological value, since it is the very unit where the relations of the technical and the significant are woven together'. The technical, in this instance, is the product and how it may have been produced; the significant is what it embodies – as Baudrillard (1981) might suggest, a 'commodity sign'. For Baudrillard there is a substantive amalgamation in modern consumption culture between the tangibility of the product and the intangible of its imagery or package; in constituting its story around particular themes the product becomes the essence of how those stories are told. Girardelli (2004) explores Italian food in the U.S., highlighting some of the stories that circulate around Italian-American food. He considers the semiological discourses associated with this food and how they solidify Italian food's place as both a myth and a reality in the modern U.S. – albeit with much help from American cinema or television, (he cites the example of the television show *The Sopranos*). Weiss (2004) offers comparable considerations centring on Jewish food in the U.S. when reviewing the composition of food packaging with obvious affiliations to Jewishness. Of interest to Weiss are the nostalgic links articulated by food packaging when styles of font or photographic presentations illuminate diasporic leanings toward the 'homeland' or to something 'lost'. He continues (2004: 48):

⁶⁸ As suggested in interviews: 8/7/05, 20/7/05, 29/7/05.

⁶⁹ One such potential is quality and how farmers' market products come to be recognised as 'quality produce' (for a more detailed analysis of quality see Chapters 2 & 7).

Many packaged food companies construct their product identities using mythological tropes as a means to link their products with a particular idea. By linking their product to notions of tradition, the manufacturers of mass-produced foods obfuscate the real and eminently modern conditions that make packaged foods possible.

Within such examples as those explored by Girardelli and Weiss are the universal ingredients of a sign where both the stimulus and the response generate energies comparable to, as Barthes (1964) would suggest, the 'signifier' and 'signified'. The foods in question raise awareness and expectation and how these are realized owes much to the construction of 'myths'. The focus of both papers is on the semiotic manipulations that create such ambiguous stories and, as such, comparable stories emerge at farmers' markets where diasporic issues are replaced with localized, organic or healthy eating issues. As Italian products may offer the promise of a large family with whom to share your meal, so too a farmers' market offers an amalgamation of a reality or something imagined. As Barthes (1964: 17-8) observes:

In linguistics, the nature of the signified has given rise to discussions which have centred chiefly on degrees of 'reality'; all agree, however on emphasising the fact that the signified is not 'a thing', but a mental representation of the 'thing'.

Much like Italian restaurants featuring the colours of the Italian flag or Jewishness celebrated through the caricature of the verbose matriarch, at farmers' markets, the style and format utilized represents their intentional goals or ethos.

Self-promotion at the farmers' markets uncovers the ambiguities and ubiquity of signs and their role, both materially and aesthetically, in commodification. One promotional tool utilized by practically all farmers' market producers is the leaflet or flyer, handed out to potential consumers or left on the stalls where consumers are free to pick them up. The flyers range from well-produced glossy productions to ones that appear to be photocopied. Generally, flyers contain information on the background of the business, its location and/or contact information, or include current price lists or markets and fairs they will be attending during the coming months. The artistic content varies enormously as some have 'professional style' photographs depicting scenes from the farm and others include 'homemade style' logos. In a Barthesian sense the

representational signifiers that warrant attention are the messages scripted on the flyers, for most producers seem to have developed a ploy of summarizing their business in one witty or insightful sentence. Obviously taking their lead from the world of marketing, a clever play on words or a noticeable slogan offers some ideas as to what the producer sells. As Hopkins (1998: 70) suggests:

Slogans are loaded with secondary or connotative meanings; they signify more than a superficial glimpse might suggest, and they are intended to operate as such. These short, memorable, uncomplicated phrases are used to capture attention and encourage consumption by evoking strong, positive impressions associated with the commodity.

Condensing a business into a single sentence is unrealistic and improbable, but reading the linguistic tone, syntax or signs can suggest an interesting insight into how producers construe their readability to consumers. On the face of it, such sentences conform to what market styles dictate – a short sharp message – but they also deliver sentences that are designed to highlight individuality, superiority and above all an enticing or attractive message. The impact of such is curtailed when each flyer has a slogan in a saturated market. To give some impression of the value of ‘signifiers’ at the markets a content analysis was conducted (see Figure 3) on 40 flyers picked at random from Durham, Hexham and Newcastle markets.

The content analysis firstly focused on whether the flyers contained a slogan or a picture of the farm/farmer/produce – to give a systematic analysis of the patterns or topology of the approaches taken by producers (Rose 2001). The analysis then concentrated on slogans, because in these instances unlike photographs, the farmers have sole input in developing or designing the slogan. The photograph and design of the flyers were often the responsibility of promotional companies hired to produce the flyers.⁷⁰ There were three dominant themes within the slogans and they are grouped accordingly. The first was the *emotive* content, which tends to acknowledge health, organics, ethics, links to the past/tradition, taste, quality or family; for example, ‘Quality meats... taste the difference’ or ‘Quality Natural Food’. There is an emphasis in this theme on the personal well-being and the benefits consumers receive. Secondly, the *networks/methods* content highlights localness, the ‘journey from farm to larder’ and/or processes of cooking. The slogans in this theme tend to promote the produce in terms of alterity and the emphasis is placed

⁷⁰ Interviews: 11/1/05, 26/1/05, 19/1/05.

on the unique beauty/importance/quality of the north east and the pleasure to be derived from such delights and how the consumer could buy 'A little piece of the Dales'. Thirdly, *materials* play a prominent role in many slogans; here the themes of the farm, the produce or other forms of the business, such as farm shops or box schemes were to the fore. For example, 'A visit good enough to eat' extols the virtues of one farm and coffee shop.⁷¹ In a few of the flyers, their themes crossed over, and as Hopkins (1998) suggests there is a variety of acceptable interpretations, and no interpretations are 'absolute truths'. The five examples in Picture 9 depict a range of flyers and slogans.

Picture 9: Flyers from a Durham farmers' market

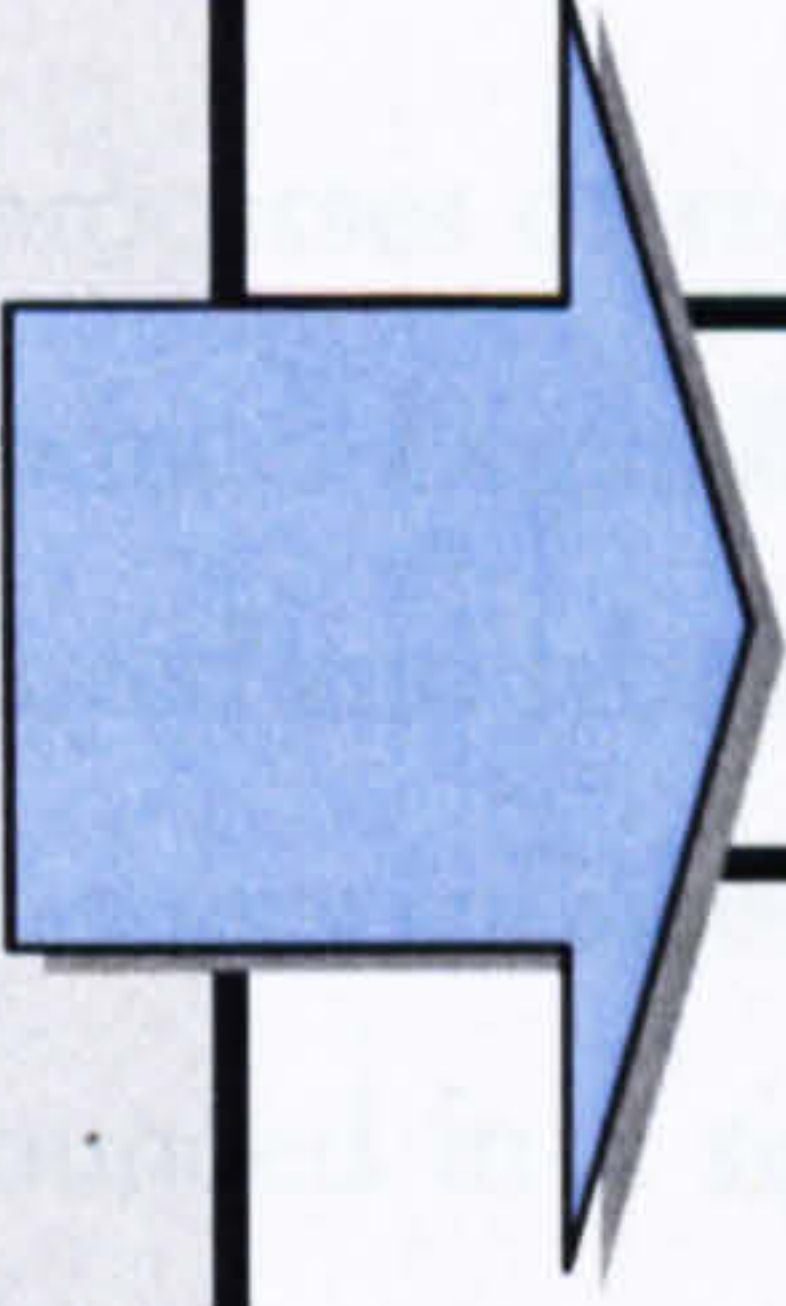


(Source: author: 19/05/05)

⁷¹ Staff at this particular cheese company wear aprons bearing the slogan 'Age is NOT important unless you are a cheese'.

Figure 3: Flyer Content Analysis

Focus 1		Focus 2	
Slogan	34	Emotion	11
		Network	11
		Materials	14
Pictures	28		



The semiological content of the flyers and their hermeneutics reinforce the underlying ethos of what the producer attempts to promote and sell. With one eye on sales and another on the ethos of the company, the slogan offers hints as to the producer's motivations and aspirations – good cooking, a return to traditional means of production, organics, direct sales or something more. The flyers contrast a marketing device with that of the invested meanings within the business, meanings that help to construct both exchange and value, along with the symbolic resonance of the producer's desires and purpose – as Baudrillard might add, 'a sort of structural copulation between the two' (1981: 161). The slogans, one may argue, are not catchy and would rarely gain any attention from a professional advertiser, but they do draw attention to the signifier and the signified that makes the sign (Barthes 1964). The reality of the flyers, and indeed farmers' market food as a whole, is that they are signs which include simple linguistic expressions or terms layered with innuendo or meaning and these convey what can be presumed to be a relatively straightforward semiology. As Baudrillard (1981: 144-5) argues, there is a logical beginning and ideological ending:

... ideology is the process of reducing and abstracting symbolic material into a form. But this reductive abstraction is given immediately a value (autonomous), as content (transcendent), and as a representation of consciousness (signified).

What Baudrillard highlights as the processes of reduction and abstraction are, in many ways, the keys to viewing farmers' market produce. Logically the produce appears similar to non-farmers' markets (in that it is packaged, displayed and labelled in much the same way - as dictated by food hygiene regulations), but through abstract influence such as semiology and/or slogans or flyers the content is re-established or grounded in a signified or generated manner. Signs, including those of the mass-media, help to invent ideologies, which in time are aided and sustained by producers and to many extents by consumers in a self-fulfilling prophecy – they believe it is a 'thing', therefore it becomes a 'thing'. This is much like the example Barthes (1997) utilizes, when viewing an advertisement for Italian pasta that plays on the pasta's Italian heritage but not the pasta's content or context. For him 'Italianicity' becomes the code and, as such, the 'myth' of Italian pasta becomes a 'reality'.

Conclusion

At farmers' markets, myths and realities can solidify the impressions and experiences of those who attend, along with some of the more tangible materialities such as the markets, the weather or farmers' market food, and these examples serve to present and represent the materials and the material practices that consolidate the assemblage that is a farmers' market. Within the constructs and structures of the markets there are many stories that fundamentally offer how farmers' markets can be viewed, reviewed or understood. Just a few of the threads that weave the narrative of the farmers' market have been traced and as Law and Mol (1995: 291) suggest:

There are endless stories to tell. Endless stories about practice. About interactions. About designs. About coincidences. About sequences. About logic. About inclusions and exclusions. Endless stories about the kaleidoscope of materialities.

There have been many stories missed out – through intention or accident – but those reviewed attempt to draw upon how objects become ‘imprinted’ with values and meanings, not as Appadurai (1986) has suggested (through a ‘classic capitalist mode’), but rather where the meanings offer connections and networks revolving around such things as ethos, morals, ethics or health benefits. In some ways, farmers’ markets attempt to disturb the modalities that frame ordinary consumption patterns and as suggested, buying produce at the markets open a window to something new or different in the face of normal retail practices. This chapter has highlighted how the encounter between producer and consumer is managed, conducted and packaged in order to examine some of the nuances and subtleties of the markets and how they ‘play out’. The emphasis has been on the materiality of the market and, in particular, how materials influence spaces of consumption such as a farmers’ market. In Chapter 5, the story continues to develop by introducing the concept of affect and argues the role of affect offers many clues into the meanings and understandings associated with farmers’ markets.

Chapter 5

Affect and practice – why people go to farmers' markets and do what they do

affect is understood as a form of thinking, often indirect and non-reflective, it is true, but thinking all the same.

(Thrift 2004a: 60, emphasis in original)

Chapter 4 concentrated on the materialities of farmers' markets and highlighted the 'stuff' that makes them happen. This chapter examines the 'something more' or the 'something different' that happens at the markets. These are relatively ambiguous concepts in that they are hard to pin down or describe – what is referred to here is how for many farmers' market producers and consumers there are intensities of feeling towards the markets and/or the markets become something to which the people in question have become attached. In moving in this direction it is the intricacies, the unconscious moments, the banalities and the ephemerality of the farmers' market that are drawn upon in suggesting how some of the immaterialities – as well as the materialities – of the markets matter (see Jackson 2000; Philo 2000; Brown and Stenner 2001; Lees 2002; Anderson 2004). For instance, much of the literature on issues such as taste (see Chapter 2) is typically concerned with symbolism layered on to objects and the objects then

disappear somewhat within the literature (see Teil and Hennin 2004; Hennion 2007). This chapter explores the objects of the farmers' markets and the symbolism or affective relations between objects and agents through empirical evidence. The oral statements of producers and consumers, as well as the observations made at the markets, ground these interpretations.

This chapter engages with immaterialities in an attempt to keep a focus on the object, as well as the symbolism concerned with such an object (see chapter 4 & 6). The focus rests upon the moments when producers and consumers meet and how the actual physicality of something like taste or more emotive or affective notions are tied up in people's experiences of the markets (Jones 2005). Farmers' markets are, as one consumer suggests, 'an accumulation of things I like'⁷² and invariably the layering or textualization of a market is understood through processes such as experience, acceptance or routine in the structuring and understanding of what things mean. Meaning emerges in personal or individualistic interpretations and conflates the complexity of reasoning, such as likes or dislikes. Notwithstanding the objectification of farmers' market produce and, indeed, the specific social or cultural contexts of how people use things, relate to things or experience things, the materiality of an object is always positioned within networks of meaning and understanding (see Chapters 2 & 6). As such, there are many questions of 'affective modalities of association' (Whatmore 2002) or how things are understood and the rearrangement of those understandings through, for example, hybridity. There is an assemblage of material and immaterial notions during moments of interaction at the markets and embracing these 'helps explain more abstract social processes' (Jackson 2000: 11). Exploring notions of affect from such a perspective brings an increased understanding, in a holistic sense, as to what occurs. Affect allows an interpretation of consumer preferences, actions, interaction, encounters and engagements that, in this instance, builds on the more practical or material realities of shopping and selling at farmers' markets (see McCormack 2002, 2003).

What is suggested is much like Deleuze's (1993) notion of the 'fold' – 'where actions (object) and meanings (subject) fold into one another in creating an assemblage that is neither one nor the other but something new or unto itself' (Dewsbury 2000:486). Folding and unfolding is the engine of continuous movement and collision, where for example people, products, motivations and preconceptions come together within a collage of associations, links and networks. Deleuze

⁷² Interview: 1/7/05.

suggests 'becoming'⁷³ or 'difference and repetition' as the way in which moments can be understood/explored, and when agency (human and non-human) is added to the fold, entities, occurrences and thoughts provide extra elements of ambiguity or impreciseness. The ebb and flow of social gatherings, relations and networks frame the workings and to an extent the outcomes of something like a farmers' market and thinking of the everyday, it is easy to reduce many of our actions to something we just do without thinking (De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998). As Deleuze (1993) suggests, the 'intermezzo' (or in-between) is the place of life, a place of 'transcendental empiricism' where the world is in constant flow and experience is never truly grounded. As Dewsbury (2000: 475) states, 'apparent within the transitory and decaying corporeality of such moments one can also suggest that while these happenings may not possess immediate meaning they are nevertheless intelligibly felt'. As such, this chapter considers the in-between. The in-between is the ground that lies between that which is extremely well practiced or unconscious and indeterminacy or the un-knowing. It is here that both the unconscious and indeterminate fold into 'being through the significations that emanate from those material arrangements and foldings' (Hetherington 1997: 187) and this is what allows the moment to happen (Dewsbury 2000).

The chapter begins with a review of affect and explores how food at farmers' markets can affectively compound the subjective and hard to quantify appreciations that drive 'feeling-cum-behaviour' (Thrift 2004a) in those who participate in such events. It considers notions of taste/quality/emotion as farmers' market produce systematically becomes enhanced because it embodies the ethos or spirit of the markets. The subjectivity of a product at the farmers' market can drive consumers' behaviour and generates experiences owing much to impulse or intensity and this chapter develops such thoughts in considering, for instance, how the relatively ordinary space of the market emancipates practices in the context of the everyday (Guattari 1995). The second section of this chapter turns to the dynamics of the encounter and explores the embeddedness or entanglement of relations in how the role of the consumer and producer directly affect the processes and practices of buying and selling, or the encounter/transaction.

⁷³ 'Becoming', 'difference' and 'repetition' are something Deleuze uses in contradiction to structuralism and its idea of being and identity. For Deleuze structuralism, and indeed experiences (or phenomenology), are foundation stones upon which to base systems of knowledge. It would be impossible to explain language and our experience of language without a language to frame it in or through, but such a foundation provides only a beginning in looking at how things come into being or mutate and change over time, space or through experience (see Deleuze 1993, 1994).

Once again in attempting to highlight the 'messiness' of farmers' market, the thesis draws upon both the practice and emotive context through which relations are understood and valued.

Building upon this concept, Chapter 5 examines moments of intimacy in how producer and consumer practice interaction and encounter. Fundamental to many actors' appreciations of what a farmers' market offers in comparison to other forms of food retail is direct access to the producers, and in such interactions there is an affective modality because producers often assume elevated roles as they guide potential consumers through flavours, tastes, production techniques and so on. There is a consummate awareness that preferences such as taste do not always rely on the actual physicality of that taste, but sometimes taste is a performed appreciation that guides the process. The negotiated practices and structures of the encounter between producer and consumer are the affective roots or antecedents that sustain the practicalities or realities within the social context of how the encounter is managed and sustained. The final section considers issues of practice and routine and how these are integrated processes that engage the encounter, in exploring some of the personalized stories of those interviewed, what may be comprehended is why people attend the markets and why they do what they do. While embedding factors, such as relationships between producer and consumer, have been viewed as rather indeterminate or impulsive (Thien 2005; Callon 1998; 2003), in fact what often guides these processes is a more scripted or deterministic stance through which transactions and interactions are 'played out'.

Affect - The tasting is in the eating

An affect theory is all of our experiences to date that are remembered (or better, perhaps registered) in the moment of responding to a new situation, such that we keep 'a trace, within [our] constitution' of those experiences. For Tomkins, then, affect connects us to others and provides the individual with a way of narrating their own inner life (likes, dislikes, desires and revulsions) to themselves and others.

(Hemmings 2005: 552)

When confronted with new situations and contexts inevitably we rely upon previous experiences in navigating how new experiences unfold (see Chapter 6). For the producers and consumers at farmers' markets, many of their experiences are guided by previous encounters of, for example, buying and selling food at summer fairs and other such events. Moreover, what producers and consumers learn from these experiences is affective in suggesting, constructing and/or reinforcing how interactions at a farmers' market may develop and are 'played out' - much as Deleuze (1988: 217) suggests, a 'body affects other bodies, or it is affected by other bodies'. Emotions are prevalent at farmers' markets, for example, a sense of *communitas* (or community affiliation) or a sense of belonging (Turner 1969). However, problematic to analysing such issues, is representing the personalized thoughts and actions of farmers' market actors.

When we buy a product, we often buy a story with it. Successful businesses, companies and shops can weave associations and understandings around certain produce. For instance, certain shampoos conjure up images of exotic fruits or jungles, or certain motorbikes suggest rebelliousness. In evidence is a narrative that burgeons with the mere mention of a product name, and while the story sold may be directly related to the advertiser's imagination, other stories are the result of how the product has been usurped in some ways by its consumers - a tactic advertisers inevitably learn to utilize. Farmers' market produce often comes with its very own story. For example, the journey a product takes to the market is engaged with mundanity (see Chapter 4), as well as the more remarkable components that may excite consumers, such as

the small distance the product travelled. However, within the context of the journey, there is a selective 'story-telling', highlighting the images and computations associated with a product, which awakens something more rather than something less. Farmers' market produce is often framed within difference or alterity and is valued and regarded because of this difference (Wittgenstein 1980, also see Chapter 2). Crang (1996: 48) writes of geographical lores when products are sold as 'global collections' or 'ethnic designs', with 'comparatively differentiated culture areas falling victim to homogenisation through increasingly global commodity flow'. Particularly evident in Crang's examples are the commodities brought home from holidays and displayed around the home. Nonetheless, what are constructed are imaginative projections where commodities or objects embody experience, as well as the more clinically driven imaginations dreamt up by producers, advertisers and marketers. In essence, 'a process [of] consumption neither begins nor ends with the act of shopping and purchasing' (Pred 1996: 12).

Elements of nostalgia, localism, healthy living and 'doing your bit' for the local economy are emotive factors considered by many farmers' market consumers⁷⁴ and much like Crang's ethnic furniture or Campbell's craft consumption (2005), many products can and do initiate affective modalities. These modalities, as Campbell notes, deliver 'middleclassness' and individualism through buying something 'unusual' or 'different' within the context of the all-encompassing world of mass-production. As Campbell (2005: 39) suggests:

Thus, while the consumption of craft objects is seen as a sign of a healthy, educated, discernment and 'good taste', the consumption of mass manufactured goods is commonly regarded as both a symptom, of and a further contribution to, a general state of 'alienation'.

For many consumers at farmers' markets, there is an affective register, a register, of course, prevalent in many other retail outlets. However, as Thrift (2004: 66) states, 'it is often the force with which passion is delivered which is more important than the message', and, as such, when consumers and producers are interacting on a face-to-face basis the delivery of passion is forthright. In a sense there is 'messiness' to affect at the markets. Take the example of taste in

⁷⁴ Interviews: 6/6/05, 8/7/05.

exploring how this can play out. Taste here is the actual physicality of eating the product and equally, the affective component of taste includes some of the performances or immaterialities that proliferate. The affective information that strengthens an experience is one that is mapped onto that very experience and, as such, human judgement is an affective response that occurs quickly and viscerally (Loewenstein 2000; Slovic et al. 2004). Farmers' market consumer choices are regularly swayed not exclusively by the sight or taste of the product, but by the emotive, passionate or face-to-face context in which it is set. For example, the following farmers' market consumer is reflexive as to why she shops at the markets - issues of localism and means of production engage her thoughts:⁷⁵

Well I suppose, it's rather the philosophy of it, you get more of a sense that you know where your food has come from, and I like that sense of, emh, of recognising where the food was grown or where the animals were reared and I have kids of my own and I want to teach them that sort of thing. That bread didn't come from a factory but it did come from wheat grown in a real field and harvested by a real farmer, so you feel that much closer to it... I don't know that I, I'm not that much of a gourmet that I would notice the difference between a carrot that was imported for a supermarket versus a carrot that I buy at a local farmers' market. I don't know, but that is not what is terribly important to me.

Emotions occur in the everyday in multifaceted ways and as Thrift (2000a) suggests emotions are often non-representative. Therefore, viewing why a person buys a carrot is a layered process. There is a play between discourse and materiality here, an encounter, where affect is the motion of the emotion (Thien 2005). What can be drawn from this consumer's comments is how the overriding concerns, for such things as teaching her children, are the values upon which bread or a carrot are based or mobilized to show. By emphasising the connections and networks as important, the consumer plays with a sense that the food in question is valued for how it is grown and processed rather than how it tastes. Relating affect to the material world in some ways suggests the role affect plays in ordering the relations between bodies and ideas (Brown and Stenner 2001). Conceivably, the consumer's carrot may taste inferior to, for instance, a supermarket one, but the belief in the invested energy of a 'real' farmer far outweighs any

⁷⁵ Regularly attends Newcastle farmers' market, has teenage family, buys for five (8/7/05).

benefits to be gained from a supermarket carrot. Typically, for consumers what enhance farmers' market produce are the contexts that surround the product. Another consumer explains:⁷⁶

Quality food is, is, well yes, usually stuff that is made sort of organically where typically, you know, with meat it would be people who care about their herds, you know, how they are kept. I bet you if you talk to the majority here [Newcastle farmers' market], they will all be totally passionate whether it is the people who make the cakes, all the ingredients will be great, people who sell the meat you know where the food comes from, they know their herds, the people who make cheese you know. you want to support the passion for it as well and inevitably the quality will be higher and kept better.

There is a performance of 'values' in what this consumer suggests; for her, the passion of producers in how they talk, or indeed, perform (see Chapter 6) creates a degree of comfort or authenticity: 'all the ingredients will be great'. Embedded in such thoughts are emotive and affective realities (as well as more material ones), for affect is an embodied practice and, as such, encompasses many realities – for instance, mood, passion, intensity or feeling (Anderson 2006) – and in this light affect is a form of thinking (Thrift 2004a) that plays out many actions and relations at farmers' markets.

A Little Bit More Going Into It

So affects, for example, occur in an encounter between manifold beings, and the outcome of each encounter depends upon what forms of composition these beings are able to enter into.

(Thrift 2004a: 62)

Affect possesses a kind of 'freedom' in the aims and objects it attaches to things (Thien 2005), for individuals are affected and affect in very personable ways. Within this, of course, there are

⁷⁶ A regular farmers' market attendee, particularly Newcastle farmers' market and buys for two (1/7/05).

choices and influences, which add to affectuality. Consider the interactions between individuals at farmers' markets. Their encounters invoke instances of neglect and attention. For example, a consumer may choose to ignore a producer because of their mannerisms, while for another consumer these mannerisms are what appeals. Thien (2005: 53) warns of affect, 'it is my feeling that such a focus is insufficient for addressing the issues of relationality which are so profoundly embedded in our everyday emotional lives'. However, Thien's views on affect and emotion have been contested (see Anderson and Harrison 2006; McCormack 2006). Nevertheless, affect offers an 'intensity of feeling' towards farmers' markets. The markets are subjective practices, through issues, as mentioned, of localism, organic foods, healthy living, nostalgia or the 'feel good factor that often ensues from ethical type consuming' (Campbell 2005). Farmers' markets facilitate networks and associations compounded by subjective appreciations. The relationality of such practices cannot work without affective modalities, where issues sit in an affective register which is to the forefront of most actors' considerations (see Brown and Stenner 2001). As McCormack argues, 'the importance of affect is not necessarily its personal or interpersonal quality, but its *transversal* quality, the way in which it operates as a catalytically eventful bridge between a multiplicity of movements and relations' (*original emphasis*, 2003: 496). Affect at farmers' markets offers the potential to enliven factors that 'catalyse' issues, meanings, interactions and the circumstances that surround buying and selling. Directly and indirectly what motivates producers and consumers at the markets are some of the issues mentioned, and these create a commonality or bond. Actors participate through affectivity as the consequences of assemblages reformulate the markets as an 'eventful bridge' between awakenings and issues of food or health - much like Guattari's (1995) inclusion of affective realities in the context of everyday practices.

Affect is often considered as something which is only experienced and which cannot be read (O'Sullivan 2001; Hemmings 2005). What fuses or assembles social meanings and understandings are the feelings and responses present in moments of affectivity. It is 'the fundamental encounter, the recontre of the 'in-between' of the fold that is the juxtaposition of thought and unthought' (Stivale 2006: 33). That which is lost and found between two bodies during a conversation or interaction is the balance held by affect. As Hemmings (2005: 551) continues:

..affect manifests precisely not as difference, but as a central mechanism of social reproduction in the most glaring ways, the delights of consumerism, feelings of belonging, attending, fundamentalism or fascism, to suggest just several contexts are affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order.

Affect is intrinsic within human judgement and decision-making and often is a component in cognitive behaviour that is not readily acknowledged in rational behaviour. As Slovic *et al.* (2004: 312) suggest in relation to affect and the evaluation of risk factors, such as meeting a stranger on the street, 'affective responses occur rapidly and automatically'. For them affect strategizes behaviour in the anchoring and adjustment of decision making and information processing, while affective perceptions guide readings of situations. In essence, behaviour is often guided by feelings and emotive contexts. This is relevant because consumers' behaviour, in particular, can be accused of being driven by feelings and more especially by taste. However, affective taste, as in the flavour of a product, is symptomatic of many influences that inadvertently affect consumer behaviour and choice. Many consumers freely admit that they could not taste the difference between organic and non-organic or non-supermarket and supermarket. As a consumer comments:⁷⁷

You assume that the quality is going to be better... You assume because you just feel that it is not as mass-produced, so it's not as intensive and there is just that little bit more going into it.

The 'little bit more going into it' is affective in that what is often understood in these terms is the subjective investment of the producer in their produce. As another consumer⁷⁸ replies when asked why they thought farmers' market produce is superior to that in supermarkets:

... just because the man himself, he can talk about it, he knows what his animals have been fed on and all the rest of it and I feel anyone who is as concerned as that will take care of his animals.

⁷⁷ Attends Newcastle farmers' market, buys only for herself and is a vegetarian (27/6/05).

⁷⁸ Regularly attends Durham farmers' market, has a grown family, buys for herself only (12/7/05).

Problematic to issues such as taste and quality are their quantification. Much as O'Sullivan (2001) suggests, one can experience affect but cannot read it, so understanding something like taste proves elusive. Describing taste is ambiguous and subjective; what often appears easily understandable is often difficult to describe (Wittgenstein 1999). For example, one consumer⁷⁹ talks of the difference between the quality of the food at the farmers' market as compared to other means of sourcing food, but when asked what was the difference, she suggested taste as the key. When asked to describe what taste is for her, she replied:

What is taste, it really is, ok emh, you buy a packet of spinach in the supermarket and it has got a sell by date, use by date whatever and it does last till then. You buy the organic, it doesn't last as long but the taste is totally different and I am sure the one that you buy from the supermarket they do with the spinach as they do with the lettuce, it is packed with gases to preserve it. There is a vast difference in taste...

The response of this consumer in some ways demonstrates the difficulty many consumers have in explaining taste; it is something that is valued yet inexplicable. In essence, taste could be viewed in terms of 'automaticity' (see Chapter 6), where an action becomes so practiced it is automatic and relatively unquestioned. In such situations, explaining preferences or actions becomes difficult because they are so embedded in the everyday lives of the actor.

⁷⁹ Intermittently attends Newcastle farmers' market, has a grown family, buys for two (28/6/07).

Embeddedness / Entanglement

Rational economic behaviour is limited not only by a person's cognitive constraints but also by shared collective understandings.

(Hess 2004: 171)

The moment of transaction for many farmers' market producers and consumers is where many understandings, assumptions and/or reasonings combine or 'come together'.⁸⁰ In essence, it is the justification or final process. Granted, it might not be the final act - the food is yet to be eaten and cooked by the consumer and the producer has to pack up their stall - but it is certainly the seminal act. Attention should be drawn to the understandings created and the practices mobilized in the build up to the core practice of the market - in other words, the transaction - and as Hess (2004) asks, 'who is embedded in what?'. Entwined within the context of this action are, for example, the antecedents, the economic situatedness or the sociability that compounds not just the markets, but most of everyday life. Here, individual stories surface; while the moment of transaction or interaction is fleeting the combination of knowledges and motivations drive appreciations of the markets and what they mean to people. This is in many ways the affective modality of how farmers' markets are understood and enacted. The actors give the markets their agency and prove essential to their being, and to the personal and intimate connection between producer and consumer that can often be absent from other more conventional forms of retailing in the UK. On the whole, social embedding is what galvanises trading at farmers' markets: 'if relations between producers and consumers are distant and anonymous in more 'global food systems', in local, direct markets, they are immediate, personal and enacted in shared space' (Hinrichs 2000). A plethora of networks and relations converge fluidly at the point of sale, as the product is invested with an amalgamation of subjective conclusions or emboldened with affective rationalities that often become attached to things (Thrift 2004). As Murdoch (1998: 360) states:

⁸⁰ Interviews: 5/7/05, 20/7/05.

... materials solidify social relations and allow these relations to endure through space and time. Networks consist, therefore, of both subjects and objects. Moreover, 'objects' are never just objective and neutral; they contain and reproduce the 'congealed labour' ...

Campbell (2005) continues in much the same vein, expressing that products through their means of production enliven 'symbolic meanings'. At farmers' markets the produce on sale appropriates meanings and understandings through, for instance, the 'shared space' between producer and consumer, as a transference of knowledges and expertise becomes 'special, precious or beyond price' (Campbell 2005). A more localized space can also become the selling point (e.g. Northumberland mustard at a Northumberland farmers' market) and the produce assumes enhanced properties. On balance, enacting these networks is fundamental to many types of retailing. However, at farmers' markets the components of social interaction are magnified because the producer becomes the retailer and he/she must incorporate selling their product into the equation. There is no buffer afforded by intermediaries - instead the producer is at the 'coal face', and confidence in their produce must translate immediately and effectively to the consumer. For farmers' market producers, meeting and dealing with consumers on a face-to-face basis cultivates common interests and the 'dealienating potential' (Miller 1998c) of consumption, as the products facilitate a strengthening of bonds, links and knowledges throughout the exchange. This binds notions of provenance and practice in elaborating the positioning of actors and their agency in the social connections employed as symbolic meanings are formulated and re-formulated (Jackson 2004; Winter 2005).

The passions, emotions and knowledges of farmers' markets help to rethink affect. By engaging with questions of materiality - the farmers' market produce and the stories that surround them act as an affective register, particularly through how the produce performs - the emotions that inspire or influence are understood in terms of, for example, issues of quality or taste (McCormack 2006; Anderson and Harrison 2006). Affect allows an exploration of the relations between material objects, relations, the everyday and emotions that 'materially configure the dynamics of encounter within and through them' (Tolia-Kelly 2006: 214) and, as such, it is the encounter between producer and consumer that generates moments of affective 'everydayness'.

Moments of intimacy

One way of thinking empiricism is to see all life as a flow and connection of interacting bodies, or 'desiring machines'. These connections form regularities, which can then be organised through 'social machines'. It is the task of philosophy and art to chart the ways in which bodies imagine and produce fictions, ideas or assemblages that seem to be transcendent but which are really produced from the very flow of life.

(Colebrook 2002: 89)

In thinking of everyday life, Colebrook (drawing on Deleuze) turns to the 'social machines' which in essence we all are. Irrefutably what frames everyday life are the social structures that guide participation in it. For Colebrook, comparisons with bodies and images in the world of art and in philosophy raise issues of 'fictions and ideas', but they also reinforce the notion of, as she states, the assemblage. In terms of farmers' markets, the relationships that bond the assemblage are fundamental; few social instances rely on only one person for their completion or sustainability. Everyday life necessitates commonalities that invite, cajole, and even force compatibility and ultimately the injection of 'social machines' (Deleuze 1994 121). To achieve most economical or consumer practices, assistance is almost a prerequisite; underlying this premise are social relations and their social constructions. Within economic or consumption practices, sociability is all too apparent (Lee 2000; Crewe 2003; Jackson 2004) and at farmers' markets the social relations that occur offer comprehensive evidence of how relations are moulded and structured in everyday occurrences. As with most consumption practices, an interaction takes place at the moment of exchange and here social relations manifest and entangle. Miller (2002: 225) qualifies entanglements as 'what economists mean by externalities; that is, costs that are set outside the frame of transaction'. These considerations are both economic and social and this section teases out just how these integrations fit within the framework of farmers' markets and how affect may help to order relations.

Roger Lee (2002) states, 'there is no such thing as markets of pure exchange', and Miller (1998c), also calls for an appreciation of the relations and externalities that embrace most markets. In this

light, it is worth considering moments of intimacy at farmers' markets, the moments of embeddedness or entanglements felt by participants at the markets. As one consumer states:⁸¹

I guess a few years ago we started to become interested in food and cooking and ingredients, and having a bit of a gripe against supermarkets. It was just basically I liked the whole idea of being able to kind of meet the producer and the whole thing is a lot more open and it is easier to, I can understand it. If I go to the supermarket and I buy some meat I am always, well you never know exactly where it has been, where it's come from, and is there even anybody who is going to tell you really, if you wanted to find out?

Here the consumer offers his thoughts on what initially led him to the markets and what continues to attract him there. Tied up here are a number of personalized reasonings; such as 'don't like supermarkets', 'became interested in food and cooking'. Much as Murdoch (1998:359) asks 'how social and material processes (subject, objects and relations) become seamlessly entwined within complex sets of associations', it should be questioned what farmers' markets mean to people and how these thoughts are expressed or understood. When producers and consumers interact, there are moments, however fleeting, of intimacy, where they become central to each other: attention, practice, process and performance drive the transaction.⁸² Moreover, at this moment, a conglomeration of entanglements combines to structure the action, as 'socio-material relations are arranged into order and hierarchies' (Murdoch 1998:359). Ultimately, the producer has a multitude of reasons behind his/her actions, as does the consumer (see Miller 2002).⁸³

In terms of a farmers' market, one scenario illustrates these points. Colin and Barbara are farmers' market enthusiasts and somewhat atypically travel long distances each week to various farmers' markets, yet more typically travelling to the market is the focus of their day. Barbara is

⁸¹ Regularly attends Durham farmers' market, buys for two (14/7/05).

⁸² The moment of interaction and exchange is not the be-all and end-all of these moments, but I focus on them because they undoubtedly are the pinnacle during moments of sociability or engagement between producer and consumer. As Warde (2005:137) suggests, 'consumption is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice'.

⁸³ Miller (2002) describes the scenario in terms of the purchase of a car from a car dealership, suggesting all transactions are interwoven with a social context and with a fiscal one.

recently retired and Colin works part-time, while both of their children have moved out of home. They plan their week around farmers' markets and each week follows an itinerary of markets to visit, sometimes travelling over 100 miles. For Colin and Barbara farmers' markets are a hobby which provides social, fiscal and epicurean qualities to their leisure time; they enjoy talking to producers, the element of the day out and the produce they purchase. They describe what they normally purchase at a farmers' market:

(C)⁸⁴ It varies, I tend to try and buy something different that you can't buy in the normal shops, like ostrich or venison or you know, usually meat, it's usually meat, we are not into cake or owt like that.

(B) I make my own cakes so there is no point in buying cakes, it could be pickles, emh, at Christmas we decided we would make a Northumbrian hamper for all our families so we went around as many different farmers' markets as we could, in the area to buy, cause if you go to these shops in the area like Blaydon or any of these, you know, what's it called, Millcut Centre ... now all the stuff they sell isn't all Northumbrian, it's from down south, whereas if you go to the farmers' market then they usually are the local produce. And the families are absolutely thrilled to bits, because we don't come from this area, so it was lovely for them, something unique.

Despite buying from the relatively comfortable position of having both time and obviously the financial capability of travelling to the market, there are some considerations to be made. Firstly, Colin began attending markets when he found himself out of work and while the markets helped in giving 'a job for the day'. The farmers' market provides food, which in financial terms needs consideration. Therefore, a real sense of practicality underpinned his introduction to the farmers' markets.

Well I mean the cost of them, you have got to be careful 'cause some of the costs are slightly more expensive, they are, you know than you can buy at a supermarket. So if I

⁸⁴ (C) Indicates when Colin is talking, (B) when Barbara talks - interviewed at Newcastle farmers' market (1/7/05).

know I am coming to the farmers' market then I am careful, or otherwise so that I know that I am within my limits of money and can buy it, you know what I mean.

While price is certainly a factor in attending the markets, for Colin and Barbara there are other matters to be considered. There is in a sense a frugality or prudence in how Colin and Barbara shop. It is not clear whether this is because farmers' markets have less to offer than say a supermarket, or due to the quantity of markets attended, and they simply could not afford to purchase wildly at every market. However, there is 'thriftiness' in their approach for they believe that buying quality produce makes good economic sense. As they suggested to me, quality produce tends to last longer and you get more of it. The example they used was buying free-range chickens and how compared to the supermarket birds they are more expensive, but provide much more and better tasting meat. Colin expands on what he looks for in terms of quality:

I just look for quality really, and that's what you usually get and I mean the fact that you can talk to the producer, who can tell you how to cook it and offer you advice, so if you see something different like with the ostrich you know, I said to the producer how do you cook it, so he explained, whereas sometimes if you go to a butcher's then they don't really you know... You just look for good quality meat and you can usually tell, you know.

(B) And also like Colin said, it's the fact that, they can tell you where it has come from, what has happened to it and it's all that, you know.

(KS) So do you always ask them about it?

(B) Oh yeah, we talk to them, because we find them interesting I must admit, we find that interesting.

(KS) And what do you know about the meat, for instance, and how it is produced?

(C) Most of the time because they will usually tell you ... you know, it's been fed on grass or whatever and things like that, you know.

(B) I mean, not always, but that is the usual way of doing it and because it interests us, I mean it's not a case of we are fanatical because we are not all organic or anything like that, I mean we do like organic stuff but it's not a case of every week I go and buy organic because it is organic, do you understand what I mean?

Despite an undercurrent of economic prudence in Colin and Barbara's approach to the markets, what emerges from their comments is the value of the relationship with the producer and tied into this is the affective order of this relationship. There are appreciations of how the producer is attached to their produce and the emotive or passionate content in their cooking suggestions and in the knowledge of their produce (McCormack 2006). Within farmers' markets networks and relations there is an intensity of feeling and for Colin and Barbara these feelings are difficult to find elsewhere.

As I talked to Colin and Barbara, we began to discuss what the markets mean to them and what they like about them, because in a sense, they have a stake. This is due to the time and effort they spend in attending markets – they have been attending at least 8 markets per month for the last 4 to 5 years:

(B) I think, well, I think I like the fact that you are closer to the producer and where, if I was summarizing it, that you are actually closer to the produce. You have missed the middle person out and you can get a direct link to where it has come from, you know. It might not be the person, the owner that is actually telling you but it is somebody who works for them, whereas if you go into an ordinary butcher's or a supermarket, you are just one of many, but I think it's, you, I think you feel as if, I don't know, that it is part of you if you see what I mean. That's how I would view it...

(C) I don't really know what it is about them; I just like them ... I think it is mainly the fact that you are coming face-to-face with the producer, you know, so they can tell you

how that animal or whatever it is has been reared. And they can say 'oh I reared it from such and such' and know exactly how it has gone through, you know all the processes, I think that is the main thing ...

(B) And another thing that we have not touched on is that you can try some of the stuff, you know the cheeses and things, 'cause in shops they don't do that, you go in and you just buy it, they are not bothered whether you like it, you know...

Layered within this conversation is the understanding (and teleoaffective structure⁸⁵) that Colin and Barbara hold with regard to farmers' markets. For them, the market symbolizes a careful means of enjoyment, which ultimately offers a degree of practicality - as evinced by the Christmas hampers. The background to attending a farmers' market or the teleoaffective framing of the markets warrants small consideration on their part; for instance, petrol costs in travelling to the markets are seen not as a hindrance or added expense but more as an inevitability or part of the experience. Recognising the components of attending a market tends to blend or blur into the assemblage in understanding it primarily as the sum of events. While we talked about specific issues relating to the markets, Colin and Barbara's understanding and meaning of the markets were seen as a harmony of practices, beliefs and enjoyments - as represented in the layering of assumptions held by Colin and Barbara in defining their appreciations or evaluations of what farmers' markets mean to them. Many producers hold similar thoughts with regard to the markets (as will be explored). Producers' emotive and passionate inputs into the markets are, as Colin and Barbara would attest, an important component, particularly in light of affective registers. Colin and Barbara mentioned, on a number of occasions, the producers Dougie and Kathy with whom they dealt on a regular basis. For them, Dougie and Kathy personified the relations or the moments of intimacy that are experienced at the markets, as compared to those at a supermarket. For Colin and Barbara the enthusiasm and charisma of these producers embodied the affective realities of a farmers' market.

⁸⁵ Teleoaffectivity, Schatzki (2001:52-3) suggests, is 'a range of acceptable or correct ends, acceptable or correct tasks to carry out for these ends, acceptable or correct beliefs (etc.) given which specific tasks are carried out for the sake of these ends, and even acceptable or correct emotions out of which to do so.... [I]t is by virtue of expressing certain understandings, rules, ends, projects, beliefs, and emotions (etc.) that behaviors form an organized manifold'.

Dougie and Kathy lease a large farm in Northumberland and concentrate mainly on cattle. They specialize in Aberdeen Angus – a breed becoming ever more popular with farmers' market consumers. The business is split in two: mainly for 'tax reasons', Dougie runs the farm and Kathy runs the farmers' markets side; the two companies are registered separately. Dougie and Kathy began trading at farmers' markets in 2001 and their initial market was, for them, 'a leap into the unknown'. They did not know what to expect nor how their produce would be received by consumers - as the following conversation goes some way to demonstrate. For Dougie, an important factor in their first steps into farmers' market trading was the reaction of consumers to their products:

...[we] went to Alnwick farmers' market, and we didn't know much about how you actually run it, we didn't know what we were doing, you know, we borrowed a chiller and away down there. Anyway, laid the stuff out in the middle of the market and people thought that it was so... ..so we were just chatting away to them and telling them what we were doing and then we really didn't know, so we went back the following month, you know, we thought oh! could be good, bad or indifferent and a lot of the customers come back saying how good it was. So we decided to give it a go then, to see how it went, you know and it's a long time doing all of this, we still don't advertise, it's all word of mouth, but we've built, we've got a client base now... and they just keep coming back. So if we didn't have that we would be stuffed. The main thing is to keep the product right, you know, if you are going to grow as slowly as that, the product has to be 100% and if it isn't, you lose them very quickly and you lose them for good 'cause you are only there once a month.

The underlying issue for the success of trading for Dougie is the establishment of a client base and within this, there are two distinctive tracks, much as there are for consumers. The physicality of the product has to be 'right' and so does the performance or the affectivity of the producer – as Colin and Barbara would verify. Dougie is aware of the considerations that structure his affiliations with the markets, for instance the role of being a farmers' market producer (see Chapter 6), but economics or financial opportunity are the overriding factor. However, this is not to dismiss the levels of satisfaction that are evidently felt by Dougie. As he elaborates:

... the main reason is of course that we are doing it is to make money, because the farm doesn't make money without it... What we get our pleasure out of is people coming back, saying how good it is, you know... that is what gives you the big boost, that's what wakes you up in the morning to go to the market. So we're into producing the very best that we can.

When a producer generates success at the markets there are inbuilt considerations, probably the most important being the produce and the producer's performance. The quality of the produce helps to ensure repeat sales, as does how the producer interacts with the consumer in creating a friendly and efficient service. As suggested, what often transcends the interaction at the markets is the passion and enthusiasm of the producer, where consumers take a lead from an affective register (Thrift 2004). On occasion, this affectivity is challenged or certainly open to exploitation. For example, Dougie and Kathy's company has a policy of replacing produce consumers find unsatisfactory and when a particular consumer returns meat three months in a row, 'you become suspicious'.⁸⁶ This dilemma is heavily weighted; firstly, the company openly state their return policy – 'if you are not satisfied with a product we will replace it no questions asked' – and secondly, challenging the consumer may run the risk of offending and, therefore, the company's name may be blackened. Accusing a consumer of a transgression can create an unsavoury situation. Nonetheless, amalgamated in such actions is the unexpected that arises when dealing with the public, as well as the more expected 'entanglements' of selling at a farmers' market. Essential to trading at the markets is a rationality which underlies the movements that filter through the actors and the produce. Materially the object moves and is invested with an agency that encompasses almost all that farmers' markets encourage. While the produce that is on sale at the farmers' markets is obviously the main motivator in ensuring people attend the markets, there is something more that both sustains the markets and makes them more enjoyable for people as compared to, say, supermarkets. Those factors provide motivation in the rationality that surrounds the market. Despite their image and associations with a more 'social machine', the markets are products of assemblages that harness the collaboration of an infinite amount of influences and thoughts.

⁸⁶ This relates to a story told during the interview, where for reasons unknown to Dougie one particular customer returned meat at three markets in a row. The meat was always untouched and Dougie replaced the meat each week, but after the third instance, he suggested the customer should probably shop elsewhere (Interview: 24/1/05).

Practice

Consumption might perhaps be considered a dispersed practice, one that occurs often and on many different sites, but is not an integrated practice. People mostly consume without registering or reflecting that is what they are doing because they are, from their point of view, actually doing things like eating, driving or playing.

(Warde 2004: 10)

Consumers often arrive at farmers' markets with a heightened sense of 'weekendness' - where consumers regard the markets not like a supermarket, but more like a pleasure activity to be enjoyed, much like the disposition of somebody on holiday.⁸⁷ Often 'normal' consuming defences are somewhat curtailed in that items which are not normally purchased due to expense, luxury or over-indulgence, are bought during these moments of impulsiveness.⁸⁸ As one Hexham consumer comments:⁸⁹

Well actually, when I go to the markets I don't necessarily know what I am looking for. I don't necessarily go with a shopping list, emh, I buy what's there at the time. Because what's there depends on what time you get there as well, emh, and unless sometimes you are there at the crack of dawn there is not much meat left for instance, so I buy what I see. I know, having been going to the local market for a number of years now, I know that there are some things that I would emh, hurry along to fairly quickly.

Of note is the non-rational presumption applied to the practice 'I don't necessarily know', but this does suggest an amount of knowing in that it can be safely assumed that certain items will be on sale - therefore, reducing the notion of impulsiveness. Indeed, much has been made of the

⁸⁷ Interviews: 28/6/05, 12/7/05, 13/7/05.

⁸⁸ The majority of those interviewed expressed 'impulse' as a large factor in what they bought. Some however, were rigid in what they bought, limiting themselves to primarily what they needed, i.e. what they bought the previous month, or what was on their shopping list.

⁸⁹ Regular attendee at Hexham farmers' market, buys for two (29/6/05)

link between liking and consuming (see Cantin and Dube 1999) in that the two do not always correlate; ultimately, affectivity often dominates cognition. In this light, the affective position of 'weekendness' may in fact contribute to the purchase over more rational methods of shopping, although cognitive approaches undoubtedly structure the practice. For instance, as one consumer⁹⁰ states, while acknowledging how he now consumes with considered abandonment, his abandonment is still registered with how he used to shop (notably his presumptions are grounded within the economic concerns of old - despite the fact that his form of reference is in kilos, a relatively new form of measurement in the UK):

... there is another dynamic that is going on with us and I don't know if it goes on with all of the other people you have interviewed but, we are the baby boomer generation, emh, our kids have come and gone, we have got a bit more money now, so even on the basics what we like is a little dose of luxury. And the farmers' markets give us that little dose of luxury. And believe me, you get over 50 you are not too bothered about the extra 20 pence a kilo or the extra 30 pence a kilo, you're just not bothered about it. You know, if your kids have gone, you tend to have that little bit more, that little bit more available money. So, I suspect that is not true for younger people.

There is an enjoyment that emanates from shopping at farmers' markets and with this are also a number of social practices. The following section explores how the markets are perceived during consumption and how ultimately these heightened montages of interaction become routinized or practiced.

Social practices conceptualise actors as active and creative in facilitating integrative processes that combine in any given activity, for example, images, artifacts and forms of competence (see Shove & Pantzar 2005). The appropriations intertwined within consumption form the basis of what a practice drives or motivates in prolonging both its intentions and its actualities. Reckwitz (2002:225) suggests:

Practice theory must stress that 'language exists only in its (routinized) use': in discursive practices the participants ascribe, in a routinized way, certain meanings to certain objects

⁹⁰ Regularly attends Hexham farmers' market, buys for two (8/7/05).

(which thus become 'signs') to understand other objects, and above all, in order to do something.

Practice necessitates degrees of repetition and reproduction in routinizing how processes are performed and/or appreciated. As Warde (2005:134) suggests, 'practices consist of both doings and sayings, suggesting that analysis must be concerned with both practical activity and its representations'. Agents carry performance and routine symbolizations in subjective ways – particularly in relation to how things are used or understood. Social practice involves, both physically and cognitively, how farmers' markets are conducted and played out by actors, for example, through the specialized practices of cooking and/or shopping.⁹¹ However, routines are what Schatzki (1996) would describe as 'integrative' when the practices are part of a larger picture; the practice constitutes an assemblage of behaviours – part of attending a farmers' market includes going to the market; enacting driving, walking or cycling practices; and issues beyond food (see Probyn 1999). As Schatzki (1996) elaborates, 'teleoaffective structures' encompass a host of surrounding practices which, as he suggests, need to be questioned. Within moments that are routinized the relevant step-by-step practices of the moment become habituated and, as such, their importance or input into any given situation become unrecognised by those who carry out the actions or practices. Schatzki (1996: 119) argues:

It is important to emphasize that series of why questions to primarily reveal the teleological dimension, or ends-orientation, of action. The array of cognitive conditions that in any such series discloses the teleology that governs activity: they lay out what the actor saw in an action. This implies that whatever teleology is absent ... why questions (about what one is up to) will fail to reveal the conditions that are expressed in the behaviour and determinative of action intelligibility. In these cases, there is nothing that the actor saw in his or her action.

The following conversation with the consumer from the earlier 'kilo' quotation gives an example of the set of practices often enacted at the markets. While he appears to instigate a rigid

⁹¹ Or as Warde (2004; 10) suggests, 'shopping ... is an integrated practice, with understandings, know-how and teleo-affective structure'.

hierarchy when choosing a pie, conceivably there could be a host of practices and know-hows to be drawn out from his 'sayings and doings' (Schatzki 1996).

... this is a very sad thing to say but, almost every Saturday at least during the summer ... when I'm not watching Sunderland playing football I buy a pie or a pasty for my Saturday lunch and on the weekend that the farmers' market is on I always buy from the pie man. When the pie man isn't there, I go to Rob's which has the Corbridge Larder, which is sort of one step down from the farmers' market, right, and I buy there. I never buy from Greggs because Greggs is a multinational, they're nice by the way ... I have a hierarchy, it's very clear, it is not explicit, I don't think 'why am I doing this' but I have an implicit hierarchy.

As this consumer states, he has a 'hierarchy' and conclusively it could be argued that the hierarchy directly revolves around economics in that he wants to avoid multinationals. Nevertheless, is the practice of buying a pie at a farmers' market in some way a reproduction of a football match during a non-footballing weekend? Alternatively, is the pie a symbolic reproduction of the gendered stereotyping and camaraderie experienced at Sunderland matches? Notwithstanding this, his emotions, beliefs and moods affect his judgement and consequently his actions at the markets; the hierarchy he speaks of is in some ways designed through the routine of attending football matches (as well as farmers' markets) and indeed, by the taste of the pies.

Reflections and 'doings and sayings' rarely incorporate the true intensity of rational thought. While masked as non-rationality in some circumstances, shopping at a farmers' market enacts rationality. For example, the structuring of teleoaffective configurations can reasonably be associated or certainly applied to most activities, meanings and/or understandings. As Shotter (2000: 2) states:

If Wittgenstein is correct, all or more self-conscious, individual activities have their being within a stream, or mingling streams of spontaneously responsive activity flowing continuously between us, unnoticed in the background of our lives together.

Moreover, while happily understood as somewhat individualistic, our choices appear carefree or impulsive and may in fact, as Simmel (1971) stresses, be 'the intensification of external and internal stimuli'. What often compounds our existence is the perception of freethinking, but once ingrained within social practices, those choices dissolve into the 'acceptable'. For example, as Warde states (2004: 10), 'consumption is inescapable ... and occurs often entirely without mind'. The practices incorporated in consuming are organized through understandings, meanings, rules and teleoaffective influences. They set how the processes should be initiated and performed; they detail how to open proceedings, how to respond, what action is required and how to engage that action (Settemi 1999; 2001; Schatzki 1996). However, through the affectiveness of such practices, awareness of them dwindles and they become unconscious, conditioned or, as Benjamin (1999) might suggest, actors sleepwalk in and around the practices. Essentially, the practice resolves to become a sign or indicator that serves to guide orders, hierarchies or ways of doing and seeing (Reckwitz 2002). The sociability applied to such practices is its foundation and, as such, drives and focuses the reality that it creates. The social components of the markets fuel their existence, practices and entanglements.

Conclusion

Well, your very questions were formed in this language; they had to be expressed in this language, if there was anything to ask!

(Wittgenstein 1999: no.120)

Grounding experiences, understandings and meanings often requires a common framework, for in transferring knowledge or in interacting actors need access to a 'bridge' in communicating intentions, awareness and appreciations. Language, as Wittgenstein highlights, is inescapable in framing such thoughts or actions, and effectively, and affectively, language forms the script through which farmers' markets move. The personalized stories, social machines, entanglements and layers of understanding discussed in this chapter are organised, integrated and routinized through language at the markets. Language is the prism through which most of the action at the

markets is reflected. However, while language may be the vehicle, there are many roads travelled. This chapter highlights some of the affects, practices and routines that guide actors through the markets. The markets awaken a multitude of thoughts as some of the processes discussed are enacted. What actors do is intensely subjective and, therefore, difficult to quantify, but what can be suggested is how their behaviours and understandings may have originated and the determining factors which influence how these are played out. Inherently, each person brings their own story - as the following consumer⁹² suggests in describing what she likes about farmers' markets:

Interest, quality, local stuff. In our house I don't shop, in terms of I don't do the ASDA shop, cause I loathe it. My husband shops and he is also the cook, the main cook, so he would have a different perspective on it, probably not the same. And it is just a nice thing to do, go and potter around and just interesting. I suppose it's your little stab against the globalization thing, I mean you can't, you can do as much as you can do, or as much as you can be bothered to do really. And that to me, it, it satisfies your conscience, you get nice food and it's very pleasant to do.

Farmers' markets are not liked or disliked, attended or avoided, successful or unsuccessful because of one overriding factor. Instead, it is a litany of influences, reasoning and understandings that structure appreciations of the markets and as Hemmings (2005: 552) tells us, '[affect] is all of our affective experiences to date'. What combines these structures is the glue behind the infrastructures, agencies and practices at any given market. Of significance are the moments of agency and affect that enact the processes of the market and flavour or guide how actors read farmers' market scripts. The assemblages of the market often include objects and symbolism, as well as materialities and immaterialities that are unconscious, indeterminate or, even, determinate for many of the actors at the markets. As mentioned affect encourages an interpretation of consumer preferences, actions, interaction, encounters and engagements that build on the more practical or material realities of shopping and selling at farmers' markets and, as such, my approach has aimed to reveal some of the subtleties and nuances of the markets. Affective realities highlight the modalities and materialities that embed or routinize the processes that guide behaviour - mundane practices reveal influential 'backgrounds' (Berry 2003). The

⁹² Regularly attends Newcastle farmers' market, grown family (8/7/05).

background, in this instance, is the context for many of the materialities and symbolisms of the farmers' markets and, as such, what they reveal is often influential and telling. The next chapter explores the performances and the actions at the markets and considers how these become automated to the extent that they can become relatively unquestioned. Much as affective influences are seen and read, so too elements of performance and unconsciousness are seen and read.

Chapter 6

Performance and everydayness at the markets

[The] 'world inside out' was often in the form of feasts linked to the cycles of the seasons.

(Shields 1991: 90)

Chapter 5 focused on the concept of affect at farmers' markets and traced some of the motives behind 'why people do what they do' at the markets and how experience, acceptance or routine can structure understandings of what objects, such as farmers' market food, actually mean. Building on this concept, it is worth examining the notion of performance and everydayness at the markets and exploring their role within the assemblage of a farmers' market. One of the first things that caught my attention when I first went to a farmers' market was how producers talked to consumers; their conversations engaged an animated enthusiasm and indeed, some degree of showmanship. A showmanship, unlike car-boot sales or the barrow-boy (see Gregson & Crewe 1998), it did not involve cajoling or calling out to consumers, rather centring on knowledge or expertise - for example, producers' style of dress often emphasized their farming backgrounds or producers were quick to relay their experiences and knowledge of produce to potential consumers. The more I knew the producers, the more it became apparent just how much some

of them loved to engage with their customers. Many had developed a particular style of interaction with their customers, where jokes or wisecracks were exchanged about their produce or animals, the weather or current affairs, and for consumers this all seemed to be part of the enjoyment of the occasion. Was this a performance that added to or emboldened the exchange, in the manner that a good shopkeeper always knows his/her customers, or was it simply incidental and effectively how the producers 'just were'? The performance of a vendor in an exchange can help or hinder that very exchange, for example, how they present their business, their produce and/or themselves. These are often insightful clues - outside of the appearance of produce (see Chapter 4) - for consumers to consider on an initial meeting. Performance, in this sense, is something more than the theatrical 'all singing, all-dancing', but is something that is incorporated in an everyday sense, particularly how people conduct their social beings, when they meet, talk, shop, eat or drink. A performance presents a projected reality, the character 'on stage' presents a social 'face' to their public, and this 'face' is regularly seen selling produce at farmers' markets.

To date, most of the literature concerning performance has mainly considered marginal groups or counter-cultural movements, where the performances are distinctly different or in opposition to more established norms (McNay 1999). Considering this work, the focus of this chapter is how performance augments the interactions between producers and consumers at farmers' markets (see Spiller, in press). The chapter emphasises how performance, routine and proficiency are distinctive elements in the assemblage that is a farmers' market. Moreover, the focus also considers situations where expressions of identity become complicated, for example, when farmers' market producers assume specific roles, such as the 'expert'. As Goffman (1971: 83) describes:

... it often happens that the performance serves mainly to express the characteristics of the task that is performed and not the characteristics of the performer. Thus, one finds that service personnel, whether in profession, bureaucracy, business, or craft enliven their manner with movements which express proficiency and integrity, but, whatever this manner conveys about them, often its major purpose is to establish a favourable definition of their service or product.

The chapter begins with an analysis of performance and considers how performance adds to and equally, sustains some of the interactions and actions at the markets. For instance, it explores the creation of the 'farmer', and how 'new identities' (see Du Gay 1996) infiltrate farmers' market producers' performances. The second point of focus is the routines that abound at farmers' markets and particularly, how producers learn to embrace these new roles and learn to become farmers' market producers. Inherently, their identities absorb newfound ingredients as they assume the role of the farmer or expert producer in the face of farmers' market consumers. The final focus is on proficiency and the absorption of some of these influences, given that actors become conditioned by the markets or, more specifically, the markets gain everydayness in peoples' lives and thus become unconscious entities, as actors' practices and processes become routinized to a state of almost robotic consistency. Like all tasks practised on a regular basis, patterns emerge in elevating the processes that are most efficient and, as a result, these practices become so ingrained as to become non-cognitive or relatively involuntary. Consequently, this chapter reflects on how these movements are 'played out' at the markets.

Performance

This is a theatre involving carnivalesque, liminoid rituals, and processes of enactment which are involved in the creation of new symbolic modes of expression. There is no possibility that such an experience could be sustained for long, but its elemental forms can be seen as the basis for the process by which people create new identities and identifications with one another, unsettling and making use of their chosen spatial settings as they do so. It is under such liminally transgressive conditions that symbol production, the performance process, and their spatial framing become important.

(Hetherington 1998: 152)

How does one 'think' a marketplace?

(Stallybrass and White 1986: 27)

The market square for most towns, villages, or even cities is the epitome of the public area or the 'common place' (Hirschkop 1999), and this is the site where both Durham and Hexham's farmers' markets take place (see Chapter 4).⁹³ As the name would suggest, market squares were specifically designed as a place of business (see Philo 1998) in the centre of cities and towns; however in more recent times market squares are seldom used for activities such as the buying and selling of animals. Instead, as is the case in Durham's market square, the square is used the majority of the time as a site of public convenience or gathering. In common with many UK market squares, on non-market days they are generally the habitat of, for example, people sitting in or walking through the square (Clay 1958). Excluding Saturdays, when the square holds a weekly market, Durham's market square is used sporadically for festivals, carnivals or special occasions and, as such, the farmers' market (held on the third Thursday of each month) awakens certain carnivalesque connotations. Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) considers the carnival in much the same way and explores the 'extraterritoriality' created in such instances. Bahtkin finds the carnival and indeed the market square as a 'place-beyond-place', there is an element of escape or evasion from the usual constraints of public life, an exclusion or relaxation of 'official order and official ideology' (Bakhtin 1984: 154) and a distancing between carnival and 'real world' (Stallybrass and White 1986). As Bakhtin (1984: 187-8) explains:

Abuses, curses, profanities, and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech ... such speech forms, liberated from norms, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot and create a special collectivity, a group of people initiated in familiar intercourse, who are frank and free in expressing themselves verbally. The marketplace crowd was such a collectivity, especially the festive, carnivalesque crowd at the fair.

For Bakhtin, carnival is a allegory for transformation, where the world is turned upside down (White 1993) and popular or 'low' culture supersedes that of 'high' culture. Bakhtin sets his argument in the world of Rabelais, a 16th century French renaissance writer, and challenges the 'sanitized' bourgeois version of the 'self'. As Hall (1993: 7) states, 'for Bakhtin, this upturning of the symbolic order gives access to the realm of the popular – the 'below', the 'underworld', and

⁹³ Newcastle farmers' market takes place on one of the main pedestrian streets in the city. This street is just off what could possibly be considered as the closest present-day Newcastle possesses to a market square – the area around Grey's Monument.

the 'march of the uncrowned gods'. Carnival offers difference and in much the same way the farmers' market offers alterity in relation to food shopping where, for example, shopping in a supermarket is 'upturned' by farmers' market shopping through the celebration of social relations or interactions at the markets (see Chapter 2). Much like Hetherington above, the role of performance and liminality help the processes of social relations and practice play out and as Shields (1991: 84) explains, 'liminality represents a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life'. The mode of interaction emphasised at the markets centres on social embeddedness or the face-to-face communications between producer and consumer, something that, as previously discussed, is not common to all food-purchasing situations (see Chapters 2, 4 & 5). Within this context there is a mode of interaction similar to the carnival where performance awakens an alternative rhythm of speech, gestures, hierarchies, codes, ethics and/or practices (see Crang 2001; McCormack 2002). Liminal elements in such contexts are negotiated and learned in relation to these alternative rhythms and just as Shields (1991) suggests 'places on the margins' offer rites of passage, so do the farmers' markets have carnivalesque and liminal potential.⁹⁴

Thoughts of performance often encourage links to theatre, movies and/or sports, or whatever event captures the imagination. For instance, theatre, much like the farmers' markets, involves designated spaces, roles, scripts and audiences and within theatrical performances, audiences generally gather to witness prowess, skill and/or talent. The audience congregates at the theatre, and they participate or observe and when the event is over, they disperse and possibly talk about what they have just witnessed. Performing and performance are ephemeral; the 'action' of the performer becomes the focus for a period - performances are rarely sustained indefinitely (Pratt 2000). Rather, the audience's attention, gaze, understanding is usurped by the creation of something new, transfixing, and entertaining. Nevertheless, as Hetherington points out, people create new identities and in the spirit of true theatre the roles are rehearsed and rehearsed, through as Schechner (1988: 95) states a 'ritualized behaviour'. Within the contours of performance many influences and structures amalgamate and as Schechner (1988: 101) argues 'behavior is recombined in new ways, exaggerated, repeated, fragmented, short-circuited'. In this manner, the performance is an assemblage of the experiences brought by the performers, added to a combination of directions taken from the context in which the performance is situated - and

⁹⁴ As has been argued, the farmers' markets are not always places on the margins or alternative places, but ones that through learning, liminality, performance, routine and proficiency can become places more central or normalized – not forgetting Whatmore et al.'s (2003) questioning of issues of alterity.

much more besides, such as an impromptu performance. However, Hetherington (1998: 153) suggests a performance 'can never be completely spontaneous and will always involve, as Goffman also suggests, recognisable elements'.

Performance, generally, involves some form of physical movement and physicality. Moreover, much has been written from an ontological perspective in the last 10 years on dance and its performance (e.g. McCormack 2003; Thrift 1997; Revill 2004). The naturalization or 'losing oneself' in the movement has engaged many commentators. Thrift particularly has paid close attention in reviewing rehearsal processes and non-representation, where non-discursive thoughts, actions and understandings are difficult to explain or represent. As he (Thrift 2000a: 237) states of the benefits of dance:

... it has become an increasingly central mode of cultural expression, all the way from the street to the boardroom, as a contemplation which values improvisation and encourages attunement to emergent form... Dance is a 'one-time-only' phenomenon, even when it involves repetition of a number of performances.

Thrift highlights the 'momentary combination' of all performances. The event disperses as soon as it is consummated or, 'this arrest of life to make a show of the living is the crisis that brings the performance into being and points to its early demise' (Martin, in Thrift 2000: 234), and in such events, focus, power and agency are drawn together in constructing a performance never to be repeated. Much as a dancer is trained to land in an exact spot each time they finish a *entrechat*, they rarely will. The difference is in the detail, the subtle detail. While performance easily blends into the everyday, it only does so because it can be unstructured, impulsive and reactionary – not forgetting the importance of the 'here and now' (see Chapter 7).

Just as Bakhtin (1984) talks of the carnivalesque and Schechner (1988) of performativity, such musings can apply within the contexts of farmers' market as performance emerges through the markets' atmosphere and actors' performances. Goffman (1971: 79-80) states:

The legitimate performances of everyday life are not 'acted' or 'put on' in the sense that the performer knows in advance just what he is going to do, and does this solely because of the effect it is likely to have. The expressions it is felt he is giving off will be especially 'inaccessible' to him.

At farmers' markets the everyday behaviours of the actors, their interactions, personas and projections, are engaged with performances. Interactions at the markets are an important component in what make them alternative (see Chapter 2) and, indeed, attractive for many consumers.⁹⁵ For example, as Hunt (2006: 55) states, 'through face-to-face interactions typical for direct markets, producers receive feedback on products and develop personal connections with consumers'. In this manner, how the interaction between producers and consumers are played out often engages with particular performances or in effect, identities.⁹⁶ However, performances at farmers' markets do have economic or consumptive considerations, in that the producers play a role conducive to selling the product: they assume the guise of the expert or the farmer. While it could easily be stated that in fact this is what the person actually is – for example, a farmer – there is also the added connotation of what a consumer expects them to be and in such ways the interactions at farmers' markets are performed and to an extent ritualized. Gregson and Crewe (1997; 1998) explore car-boot sales and note the 'Del Boy'⁹⁷ personas or projections of some of the vendors they have observed. In these instances the performances are altogether different from those at a farmers' market. At car-boot sales, the language, atmosphere and style of consumption relies on more proactive engagement by stallholders. Prices are shouted out, consumers are encouraged to view produce, and so on. Within this there is an underlying presumption of a huckster or 'fly by night' components (Gregson and Crewe 1997). In contrast, at farmers' markets the context in which stallholders are held is one of trust, honesty, respectability and solidity (see Chapters 2 & 4). As witnessed, there is never any shouting of price, quality or quantity at the markets; unlike traditional food markets, shouting at consumers is

⁹⁵ Interviews: 21/3/05, 27/6/05, 14/7/05.

⁹⁶ See Paul du Gay (1996: 1). His argument surrounds paid work, identity and organizations, particularly in the context of new work identities, 'for example, recent changes in the industrial and occupational structures of modern Western societies have posed questions about the 'identity' of a modern economy conceived of both in terms of the dominance of large-scale manufacturing industry and in terms of a national system of interdependent sectors, and about the identity of 'the modern industrial worker'. For du Gay a work identity is malleable and is open to many influences, thus challenging the notion of identity being simply something like a 'farmer' or 'producer', these are expressions of identity rather than an inherent identity.

⁹⁷ 'Del Boy', is a character from 'Only Fools And Horses', a popular BBC television programme. His character personifies a charlatan style vendor - out to 'make a quick buck' – but one possessing a certain charm and for some consumers also an opportunity for a bargain purchase and 'the informality .. of such marginal consumption where the character and texture of the gathering are paramount'(Crewe & Gregson 1998:42-3).

in some way seen as unnecessary and uncouth, as one producer suggested, 'no, I don't do that, my produce speaks for itself'.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, farmers' market performances and Del Boy performances do have in common an atmosphere and conviviality (or carnivalesque) that is often absent, as Crewe and Gregson point out, when shopping anonymously at malls or shopping precincts. Performances enliven the shopping experience, especially, in the context of consuming at a market, farmers' market or car-boot sale.

Routinized Performance

Farmers' market producers often approach their work in a very idiosyncratic fashion. They assume identities (and are remembered and thought of by consumers in these terms⁹⁹) and these identities are reinforced through the repetition of their actions. Examples include, producer or stall's appearance, produce on sale or producer's behaviour (being friendly, remembering customer names, etc). One producer in particular stands out, a 'farmer' who was once a publican but then bought a farm having no previous farming experience. He now runs a very successful farm and his appearance is of a stereotypical farmer: tweed cap, crook, and so on (see Picture 10).¹⁰⁰ Other producers regularly recount his story as well as his appearance and they generally emphasise his lack of farming background.¹⁰¹ Goffman (1971: 56) notes how a performer may assume a role and reconceptualise an identity and the formulation of that identity:

Performers may even attempt to give the impression that their present poise and proficiency are something they have always had and that they have never had to fumble their way through a learning period.

⁹⁸ Interview: 19/1/05.

⁹⁹ Interviews: 6/6/05, 1/7/05, 8/7/05, 14/7/05.

¹⁰⁰ Although the tweed cap is missing from the picture, on a cold day it is usually present at the markets.

¹⁰¹ The farmer, however, freely recounts his background and his 'story' figures prominently on the company's webpage. His business has also become exceptionally successful; therefore, there may be an element of resentment on the part of some of his fellow producers.

Picture 10: 'The Farmer'



(Source: <http://www.northumbrian-organic-meat.co.uk>)

The role played by this farmer emphasises how identity embraces and manifests within various influences (Butler 1997). As other producers keenly point out,¹⁰² this is in fact a role, because for other producers his past in some way makes his identity inauthentic. For the consumer, these thoughts may be distanced as they simply do not know or care that he has been farming only for the last 10 years or so – for them, he looks the part and his food tastes good. As one consumer stressed¹⁰³ with reference to how this particular farmer has embraced the farming industry, 'for instance, [farmers' name] he is doing a really good job, he is just so passionate. I have been up to his farm and oh, what a canny place he runs!'. The farmer's role or performance eradicates the inadequacies of experience or personal history, especially as his investment in the industry – a brand new cutting and packing shed and a new farm shop – creates an impression of 'passion'.

Performance is an indelible component of farmers' markets. The markets are invariably a stage and are staged, in that once a month 'it's time to light the lights'. Much like a theatrical performance, the producers prepare and rehearse for the event and each market provides the platform to launch their business, themselves and their performances, where 'a mode of embodied activity whose spatial, temporal and symbolical 'awareness' allows for dominant social norms to be superseded, questioned, played with, transformed' (McKenzie 1997: 218). Producers become something else at the market, in that they are not just a producer; performance is a vehicle that allows them to assume new practices and behaviours that conversely satisfy economic essentials (and arguably personal ones – farmers' market producers are generally

¹⁰² Interviews: 11/1/05, 19/1/05.

¹⁰³ Interview: 1/7/05.

gregarious). The market necessitates a performance that incorporates a transformation, as they become performing producers, as well as 'farmers' or farmers' market producers. The following section expands such thoughts with the notion of liminality or learning to become (Turner 1967).

Learn to become... (Routine)

... learning from other vendors matters. Other vendors can provide emotional support for this step of enterprise development, as well as pragmatic tips and advice on how to approach and retain new clients. Thus, vendors who are perhaps gentle (or not-so-gentle) competitors within the immediate sphere of the farmers' market become allies, supporters or coaches...

(Hinrichs, Gillespie, and Feenstra 2004: 52)

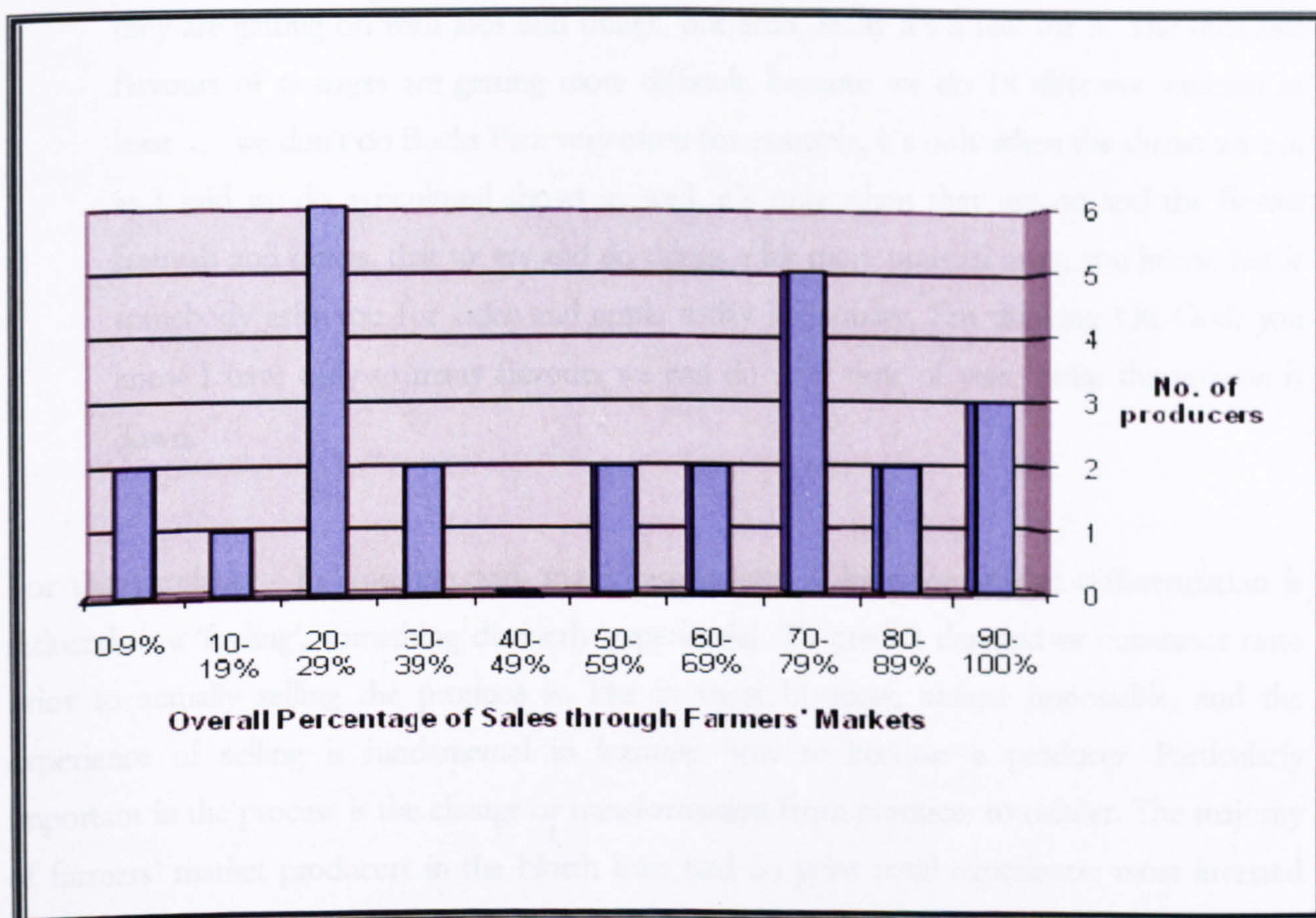
Selling produce at farmers' markets is a professional business, for some more than for others. Stallholders at farmers' markets range from those who run the majority of their business through markets to those who see them as somewhere that may help in selling excess stock or generating a little extra income. That is not to say producers deal with the markets in a haphazard manner - far from it, as is required by regulatory governmental departments such as the Food Standards Agency. For many producers, farmers' markets are their predominant means of selling, and as such, their businesses hinge on the markets. For others the markets are less important as they may deal with restaurants, shops, farm-shops, internet sales or supermarkets. As Figure 4 demonstrates, of the producers spoken to, there is variability in the percentages of their business through the markets. However, besides sales, attendance at the markets can be a form of advertising for the business, and farm-shops.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, as a cheese producer, whose farmers' market sales account for roughly 20% of his business, warns:¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Interviews: 17/1/05 (organic meat producer), 19/1/05.

¹⁰⁵ Interview: 17/1/05.

... the temptation of course is that you constantly consider it as PR and you don't make any money out of it, then what are you doing? So I am very ruthless and we look at every market, and if emh, we allow one or two losses and then we will say 'right, we'll pull it'... Well, two losses, we'll accept to break even, or a slow day or something like that, but, you know there have been a few of those; it's difficult because there is a pressure put on one to go there, and also the feeling that if I don't go will somebody else go, will another cheese maker go, there is always that, so you then you think.

Figure 4: Producer Sales at Farmers' Markets in the North East.



(Source: author 18/8/06)

Clearly, the markets serve in many ways to either supplement or provide principal incomes; of course, the business is often dictated by consumer demand, producers' time or producer interest. Trading at a farmers' market requires commitment and a period of time to establish patterns, routines, produce and importantly to establish business, generate sales or interest. Most fresh produce at farmers' markets is seasonal and it is essential producers build a working knowledge

of the markets - what will sell, and at what time of year. Most producers take about six months to establish their modes of practice,¹⁰⁶ for example, how much stock to bring, what sells best at particular markets and so on. Moreover, even for experienced farmers' market producers, knowing what to expect is difficult and can often be reduced to instinct. A pork producer¹⁰⁷ who has sold at markets for over 5 years elaborates on her approach to knowing the market:

I have got to know, it's only through a feeling I have got to know, like it's Nature's World on Sunday and I sell a fair bit of fresh pork there and gammon slices, other places I won't sell that and I sell a lot more sausage and black pudding, but that's all in my head at the minute really. I did, I have started to write it down for each market so when we are working them up we know what to do volume wise if I'm not there or if they want, if they are getting on with jobs and things, but emh, really it's a feel for it. The different flavours of sausages are getting more difficult, because we do 18 different varieties at least ... we don't do Bucks Fizz very often for example, it's only when the shows are on, as I said we do agricultural shows as well, it's only when they are on and the flower festivals and things, that we try and do things a bit more unusual ones, you know, but if somebody asks you for cider and apple today in January, I'm thinking Oh God, you know I have only so many flavours we can do this time of year 'cause the volume is down.

For this producer - in common with many respondents - knowing market differentiation is reduced to a 'feeling', something distinctly experiential. To predict demand or consumer taste prior to actually selling the produce is, like in most business, almost impossible, and the experience of selling is fundamental in learning how to become a producer. Particularly important in the process is the change or transformation from producer to retailer. The majority of farmers' market producers in the North East had no prior retail experience; most invested their time in production. However, when entering the world of farmers' markets, rather than selling to wholesalers or supermarkets, the producer becomes immersed, for example, in issues of pricing, food hygiene, packaging and dealing with customers. Returning to the cheese producer, when asked what he had learnt from the farmers' markets, his answer proved thought-provoking - his produce espoused the most provenance of all those witnessed and his business easily attended the largest number of farmers' markets in the region. His answer demonstrates

¹⁰⁶ Interviews: 11/1/05, 19/1/05, 8/2/05.

¹⁰⁷ Interview: 26/1/05.

the careful consideration he placed on farmers' markets and how he has contemplated the available opportunities encapsulated through farmers' market trading:

It is important for me to trade locally, it endorses the fact that I am the local cheese maker, I am the Northumberland cheese maker, keeps my profile up, there is a market to be fuelled or satisfied... you are never certain about the extra opportunities that come along, a retailer, a restaurant something like that... I think it is a brilliant way for somebody to come up with an idea and have a go, I think its brilliant... It gives you an opportunity, which I think quite a lot of people didn't realise to start off with... far too many people, I think, didn't understand the value of their product, didn't understand true pricing and therefore didn't get a proper price, and by a proper price, I mean that, so they could then discount to a retailer or a wholesaler and still make a margin. And I think that, a lot of people say, well I don't want to sell to anybody else, you say, well ok, then it's just lifestyle, that's fine. An awful lot of the markets are an opportunity for people, to come stand at the market, find out what is going on, test it, go there, build a relationship, PR, boom, boom, boom, boom, and then you say well I can't satisfy this, or if you go to Hexham once a month. Well, I have been selling to wholesalers and retailers in Hexham for years, so it wasn't an issue for me, but we have actually found by going to the farmers' markets once a month, handing out, 3, 4, 5 percent of the revenue in samples, we are actually encouraging trade in those shops. Which I will then sell to the following Monday ... in the van... so I am maximising my opportunity here... It is important, it does give you an avenue to start to sell, it's a lot of energy and for the very small people commitment.

For some producers grasping the economical advantages at the markets is important to their involvement and obviously, the emphasis is heavily influenced in this direction. They simply wish to make the most of the opportunity. Other producers are less thorough and the business ethos is led by a moral consideration or possibly, as I stated, selling surplus. Nevertheless, in learning how to become a farmers' market producer, a change is formulated through experience.

Collectivity/Camaraderie

As Hinrichs et al. stress (2004), producers quickly become 'allies, supporters or coaches' and embrace or encourage the collective element to a farmers' market. This in many ways may be a

survival instinct, as farmers' markets with too few stalls often do not maintain the interest needed to survive (see Chapter 3).¹⁰⁸ Farmers' markets gain cohesion and structure through the cooperation of various actors; to deliver a consistent market requires cooperation and ultimately a common belief. As Hess (2004: 174) argues, there is a reconceptualization of spatial relationships within the promotion of institutional thickness:

The concept of institutional thickness puts emphasis on the social and cultural factors underlying the economic success of regions. Factors contributing to institutional thickness are: a strong institutional presence, high levels of interaction: defined structures of domination and/or patterns of coalition; a mutual awareness of being involved in a common (regional) enterprise.

The nature of institutional thickness lies in issues of regionalism, provenance and regional economic development and there is a thread of mutual focus or cooperation emphasised by the camaraderie between farmers' markets producers. The farmers' market, to all intents and purposes, is a commodity or brand (see Chapter 4) with certain connotations and institutionally manufactured goals, ethos, ideals and plans. They are guided by, for example, the National Association of Farmers' markets (NAFM) and all bound with the institutional glue of beliefs, emotions and/or actions. As Callon (2003: 4) states:

... one solution to the question of coordination is to admit that beneath the contracts and the rules, there is a 'primitive' reality without which coordination would not be possible. An understanding of this ultimate basis is the purpose of the notion of social network or, more broadly, the notion of embeddedness ... If agents can calculate their decisions, it is because they are entangled in a web of relations and connections; they do not have to open up to the world because they contain their world. Agents are actor worlds.

¹⁰⁸ On average farmers' market in the north east consist at a least 8 producers or stalls; any fewer and the markets quickly fold, as happened to the Whitley Bay and Stockton farmers' markets. These markets were on average attended by 3 to 4 producers and in a matter of 6 months the markets stopped. For the producers involved a lack of interest on behalf of producer and consumers (attendance was also low) made their attendance 'a waste of time' (Interview: 24/1/05).

Callon's view of market relations offers many reasoned observations as to why markets may work and this is sometimes obvious at farmers' markets:

The producers do seem to have a great camaraderie, conversations jump from one thing to the next: a laugh and a joke one minute, how a child is doing at school the next, relaying a story about a parking ticket the next. The producers here today seem to be really quite familiar with each other's lives, very neighbourly I suppose you could call it. In a way, they are neighbours as their stalls lie beside each other!

Even their actions are neighbourly; when a producer leaves their stall to go to the toilet or to fill the kettle or get some change the neighbour is asked 'will you keep an eye on this for a minute'. In this act there is a great amount of trust given, as the day's profits, as well as their float (I presume), is left behind in the cash box. The neighbour takes over seamlessly, selling as if the stall were his or her own, taking cash and giving change. Also in evidence is the familiarity they have with each other's produce, as the neighbour seems to know the prices of most items. Maybe I am being presumptuous, because most of the items have price tags, but not all do. Nonetheless I have just witnessed a neighbour giving a price for a non-tagged item, maybe they guessed?

I do wonder, because stall neighbours that appear to 'get on' don't sell similar products. I wonder is this simply geographic, as similar stalls are deliberately scattered around the market or, is there a competitive edge, in that you are doing your competitors' job for them? I do think it's the former, judging by the conversations and interaction amongst the producers, even the ones in competition.

(Extract from field journal, Durham farmers' market, 14:15, 19/5/05)

Continuing in the same vein, one producer stresses how for her the learning curve of the markets was eased by the camaraderie between producers. This producer,¹⁰⁹ specializing in meats and preserve, and has been trading for over four years, but does remember it taking some time to become comfortable at the market. She emphasises how other producers helped her, particularly with bureaucratic requirements - for example the best means of gaining a food handling certificate or in a more practical sense, how to present a stall. She comments:

¹⁰⁹ Interview: 8/2/05.

... you can't beat going to a farmers' market because you can't beat talking to other stall holders who are a little bit further in front of you and you say well, actually, how do, how did you do that, you know, where did you go and find that... and they help with contacts and places to go... they put you through to the food technology departments and things like that... it's there you just have to find out really, it's a question of opening your mouth and asking... it just grows and you learn; when I first started I had an idea of what I wanted the stall to look like and the actual selling cloth is the same as the one I started then, but I didn't have anything to say who I was, so you know you look around and say oh! they have got a banner there, so you know, well you know I could do with one of those...

Undoubtedly, help and support from fellow producers is vital to the success of trading at a market, particularly in the initial stages, and creates a bond or unity amongst producers.

Liminality/Communitas

The characteristic bond between producers at farmers' market is something both more and less than a community, and possibly better suits Turner's (1969) framing of it as a *communitas*. Since 'for the most part liminal zones thrive on the promise rather than the deliverance of *communitas*' (Hobbs et al. 2000: 712), the producers bond together because this is what makes a market - as suggested earlier, it takes more than two stalls to make a market. Additionally, the *communitas* of a farmers' market promotes certain perceptions, particularly to consumers, of a belonging or of a 'drawing in' of those of similar ethos. Consequently, consumers are aware of *communitas* at farmers' markets, as one Newcastle consumer¹¹⁰ elaborates, 'Well you [producer and consumer] are discussing a mutual interest really! That's their livelihood: you are buying it, you are buying into it ... And you look at the person: they are clean, wholesome and healthy, and they strike me as being honest'. The notion of *communitas* delivers particular concepts and, as this consumer suggests, that *communitas* can be used to good effect in terms of farmers' market sales, for as she states 'you are buying into it'. Hobbs et al (2000: 711) expand on *communitas* in relation to nightclubs and bars in the city.

¹¹⁰ Regular attendee at Newcastle, buys for two (1/7/05).

Communitas is highly valued commercially for, when associated with a particular venue, it is converted into customer loyalty around the notion of an unstructured community of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of hedonism fronted by ritual elders; promoters, DJs and, ideally, the true custodians of the liminal zone, bouncers!

Easily transferable to the farmers' market and its organizers, similar states of communitas confront the 'players' of the scene - although hedonism is not something that could be levelled at many farmers' markets! Nevertheless, highlighting some of the core components in the making of a market may expose the inherent assemblages of this activity. As Turner (1967) ventures, it is the 'betwixt and between of cultural entities' that can direct and ritualise both social and cultural transformations. As mentioned, when a producer begins to trade, there is an irreversible learning curve - producers become experienced market traders - however, within this, there is a ritualizing process where more established members of the groups or collective situate, create and/or sustain the process. It is from the more experienced producers that new producers often 'take their lead' and, as such, they help to facilitate a process of liminality: new producers learn how to become experienced producers and, as such, pass through a rite of passage.

Shields (1991) explores liminality in terms of excursions to 19th century Brighton beaches and exposes these holidays as liminal 'time-out[s]', in which there is a spatial movement from the mundanity of the everyday to the carnival atmosphere of the 'extra-ordinary'. As Shield states, a trip to Brighton has transgressional qualities for many holidaymakers and day-trippers. As he argues, 'Brighton beach provided the setting for a life-changing transition, practically miraculous in nature, which bathers hoped to secure by undertaking the pilgrimage to the seaside and following a prescribed course of 'dippings'¹¹¹ (1991: 84). In much the same way, farmers' markets can be perceived as liminal sites: for many producers they offer an avenue of opportunity in expanding or diversifying their businesses and, as such, can also be a salvation in terms of businesses that may have been struggling prior to trading at farmers' markets.¹¹² Additionally, for some consumers there are many ethical considerations to their participation at a farmers' market, for example, the purchase of local or organic food and, as such, there is a ritualized construct in their evaluations and practices in terms of buying food (see Chapters 2 and 7). Enacting liminality is both an organic and non-organic process (Dewsbury 2000); just as a 'rite of passage'

¹¹¹ 'Dipping' in the sea, a 19th century panacea for many ailments.

¹¹² Interview: 10/1/05. Also, see 'Curry Report' (2001) for an emphasis on how diversification of food supply networks can promote and sustain some aspects of the agricultural industry.

is staged, managed and part of a life cycle, immersing one's business into the farmers' markets can also be experimental and speculative. Nevertheless, the assemblage of the markets, while involving economic and personal investments, does rely on *communitas*. In this sense, markets could be conceived as a counter-cultural organisation, and *communitas* is often central to such structures (Hetherington 1997). However, to maintain such processes necessitates successful and continued states of change or adaptability, which in turn provide a degree of certainty and continuity to the markets – a successful liminality.

Successful Liminality

As explored in Chapter 4, the markets offer many materialities and eventualities that in order to be successful at the markets need to be managed or navigated. For example, producers and consumers learn to navigate and understand the markets to a level of proficiency. Being new to the scene for producers and consumers can be a steep learning curve. Recognising a new farmers' market producer can spring from the fact that their stall is poorly displayed and the producer often freely admits 'this is all a bit new to me',¹¹³ while equally obvious is the performance of a new producer. Unlike more practiced producers, new producers often demonstrate awkwardness in that they do not appear to be comfortable in their new role as, 'farmer', 'expert' or 'farmers' market producer'. As argued, this style of performance arises out of a liminal act, where in effect the producer undergoes a transformation of sorts from novice stallholder to practiced stallholder. Nevertheless, a number of more material clues are often visible in witnessing new producers. Firstly, the packaging of produce may be without the readily recognisable symbols which when placed on a product add a certain kudos or endorsement to the product, for example the Soil Association symbol or Little Red Tractor symbol. Alternatively, consumers expect produce to be packaged in a particular fashion; for example, fresh meat wrapped in kitchen cellophane does not create a good impression,¹¹⁴ or in the words of one producer, 'it just doesn't look good'.¹¹⁵ Those that adhere to such forms of packaging stand out due to their lack of uniformity.

Secondly, product range can often indicate a new producer, because established producers deliver new produce on a reasonably consistent basis. For example, sausage producers in

¹¹³ Interview: 1/2/05.

¹¹⁴ Interview: 28/6/05.

¹¹⁵ Interview: 8/2/05.

particular regularly offer new and innovative styles to ensure interest and custom – possibly because of the ubiquity of sausages at farmers’ markets. In this context, new producers often offer nothing new to what is already present. Of course, ranges differ and change according to demand and consumer tastes; if nobody likes or buys a product it is quickly discontinued (Hunt 2006). Discovering these subtleties and becoming acclimatized to them is part of the rite of passage at a farmers’ market. Sales pitches and presentation also develop and change, mainly due to the discovery that an alternative means of selling works best. A lamb producer elaborates:¹¹⁶

We are thinking of changing the labelling when the line is finished next year, changing the labels and that, because they are very plain labels at the minute and that will make it more, ‘cause everything is put on trays, everything is sort of, I like to do it ‘cause the one thing supermarkets do is market the stuff properly, they really do... when we first started, everything was sold in plastic bags and everything was emh, just a hand written sticky label was stuck on, that was what we did to start with, you know, but eh that was the first year.

... we changed system this year as well, out of a white van into my new green and white stall, you know, we have done that and people are still looking for the white van but they see me, and they still say ‘Oh yeah, your white van was here’, but it’s working a lot better, we are picking new customers up by having a new system.

KS: Yours is probably one of the most professional looking stalls I have seen and did you find when you introduced it that it made a difference?

They commented on it all right... When we had the van and the step up, did you see that?

I used to have the white van there, I opened the back doors and I had a step and I had a display fridge in the back of the white van and the lunten came out over the top and eh, it worked very well, easy to set up, but a few markets I went to they wouldn’t let me park the van, the by-laws and now I’m getting more passing trade and people aren’t frightened

¹¹⁶ Interview: 18/1/05.

to sort of just walk up and have a look, but they felt committed when they stood up. ... And I don't hard sell, I don't shout 'Come and get your chops' or whatever you know because people won't, don't want it, people don't seem to want that, I don't think anyway.

Producers work through periods of 'betwixt and betweenness', particularly in the early stages of trading. In this sense, a constant liminality ensures success - not discounting the fundamental foundations that are a prerequisite to trading - but it is a fine balance: too much change and consumers become hesitant.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, one of the foremost reasons consumers begin to shop at the markets is because they are often looking for something different to what they find at supermarkets. The spirit of experimentalism may be relatively short-lived however, as one producer states: 'most of my customers like what they know and that's what they buy'.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the familiar, routinized and expected are often what guides the markets, as well as the degrees of proficiency that influence how it is performed - as discussed in the next section.

Unconsciousness Proficiency

Buying food has become a skilled work that requires several years of schooling. One has to love the rhetoric of figures, to have a taste for deciphering minuscule inscriptions, a certain aptitude for hermeneutics (the science of interpretation valued by Aristotle), and certain notions about linguistics (which are always useful for making one's way in society). Thus endowed, you will know how to interpret, and therefore to take advantage of the information generously 'placed at the consumer's disposal', as the producers say.

(de Certeau 1998: 208-9)

de Certeau describes food shopping with some of the activities' more subtle components laid bare, for as he rightly hints, shopping is a learned behaviour which computes many indicators and competencies within fractions of seconds. In these instances, many conundrums are

¹¹⁷ Interviews: 7/6/05, 5/7/05, 13/7/05.

¹¹⁸ Interview: 18/1/05.

compounded by simple questions and immediate answers. For example at a farmers' market, a consumer may think or compute, does this meat look fresh? can this producer be trusted? Or, I don't like green beans! De Certeau (1998) makes great play of the fact that produce must now be 'read', in terms of its ingredients, how it was made/reared/grown, how it must be cooked, when it must be eaten by and so on. The act of buying is layered with many cognitive presumptions, understandings and behaviours. Yet rarely are these notions questioned. Does a sell-by or best-before date take on relevance when selecting a product? As one farmer¹¹⁹ told me, 'you never see a best-before date for December 24th'. Shopping and the performance of shopping is often routinized or, possibly, so thoroughly learned it often become unconscious. The unconsciousness is in line with Benjamin's (1999) sleepwalking - rather than suppressed emotions, it is the unreflexive actions of producers and consumers at farmers' market. As argued, unconscious practice is anything but unconscious, rather an unconscious consciousness - the action evolves to become ordinary (see Shove and Southerton 2000). In a similar fashion to many shopping habits (Gronow and Warde 2001), people at farmers' markets instinctively know what they like and want - firm apples, red meat, smelly cheese and so on. Their choices may become routine through repetition or possibly because of previous experiences. Attention should be drawn to the practices that are crucial to everyday life and suggest repetition of experience is fundamental to knowledge and learning or 'rescripting' (Watkins 2006) - once planted, in a cognitive sense, as part of our being (Deleuze 1993), unconsciousness appropriates practices and actions.

Unconscious actions and movements have received much attention, particularly within the field of psychology. Automaticity, as it is termed (Bargh 1997), focuses on the mundane everyday tasks, such as driving, which engage human lives. It explores how alien habits, for example, a first-time driver's nervous initial efforts, become habituated and effortless to the extent that the driver can eventually multitask (Groeger and Clegg 1997). Much of the 'action' of automaticity focuses on the unintentionally acquired processing that is initiated by environment or stimuli, of which the actor remains unaware yet which inherently guides behaviour. Bargh & Chartrand (1999: 469) suggest the conditions of automaticity lie within two processes:

¹¹⁹ Interview: 10/1/05.

The necessary and sufficient ingredients for automation are frequency and consistency of use of the same set of component mental processes under the same circumstances – regardless of whether the frequency and consistency occur because of a desire to attain a skill, or whether they occur just because we have tended in the past to make the same choices or to do the same things or to react emotionally or evaluatively in the same way each time.

By supplanting previous focuses with familiarity, the task inevitably dissipates into something of less importance. As Simmel (1971) might suggest, the excitement of the city slowly disappears as one becomes routinized in its streets, people, sights and smells. As a task becomes more entangled in the everyday, its immanence is rendered to greater effect.

Unconsciousness may appear nondescript in that everyday practices are common to all and, in essence, speak for themselves in a rather cause-and-effect manner, for example, I am thirsty therefore I will drink some water. Despite this obviousness, Wittgenstein (1980: 39) talks of ‘how hard I find it to see what is right in front of my eyes’, or as Lorimer (2005:84) continues in much the same vein, ‘phenomena may seem remarkable only by their apparent insignificance’. Therefore, deconstructing the actions and practices of farmers’ markets reveals the more intimate reasoning as to why producers and consumers frame routines or performances in the manner in which they do. For example, often consumers repetitively buy the same products each month to the point of over-buying or buying too much. As one consumer¹²⁰ suggests, ‘I tend to buy the same sorts of things all the time and sometimes I probably get a bit of an over supply in the freezer and then I might not buy sausages for that month or something’. This consumer buys for a large family and throughout our interview stressed how careful she was in buying good quality food for her family; nevertheless, occasionally she becomes lost or ‘carried away’ in what she is buying. In addition, as she went on to suggest, there is also an emotional or obligatory connection to repetitive buying at the markets:

There is a stall where there is a very very nice lady and she sells lamb and she sells kebabs, she’s lovely, and I feel guilty if I didn’t buy anything... I think I always buy a

¹²⁰ A regular attendee at Newcastle farmers’ market, buys for a family of five (18/7/05).

few, you know, it's just to support her, you know what I mean. So yeah, because they are so nice I probably go buy stuff and even if ... I don't really need that this month.

Caught within the practices of this consumer are the many knowledges and experience that guide how she shops at the markets. For her, there is a routinized reality in what she buys and who she buys from; however, a certain amount of her shopping is conditioned, as she suggests, by guilt. Deleuze's transcendental empiricism suggests we are in a constant state of being, 'experience cannot be grounded on man, the subject, culture or language' (Colebrook 2002: 89). Instead, experience is continual and from here, we become. As Deleuze (1993: 5) acknowledges, life can quickly blur, producing many quicksilver-like moments – hard to pin down, fluid, but can easily come together:

Matter thus offers an infinitely porous, spongy, or cavernous texture without emptiness, caverns endlessly contained in other caverns: no matter how small, each body contains a world pierced with irregular passages... the totality of the universe resembling 'a pond of matter in which there exist different flows and waves'.

The assemblage of knowledges Deleuze may see as where experience and becoming emerge as something new or different. Much like Dewsbury's conviction (2000: 488) that 'everything is in-between where actuality happens', those moments of insignificance are what binds. In addition, unconsciousness allows a retraction of the usual barriers where experiences are caught unaware, elevating these moments to significance precisely because this is the when and where of cognitive experience, as fluidity solidifies. It seeps in and sets.

An example of one mode of practice often evidenced at farmers' markets: when a farmers' market customer has decided to purchase a product, the producer generally picks the product up or even takes it out of the consumer's hands. The product is then automatically placed into a carrier bag. While some consumers refuse the bags, the majority do not.¹²¹ Nevertheless, focusing on the bag, this item may be unnecessary to the transaction but produces a challenge. The bag

¹²¹ As witnessed in fieldwork.

symbolizes the assemblage of certain knowledges in that while it does have a practical use - carrying the product - it also performs something more. Generally, producers print their business names and contact details on the bag and conclusively the bag becomes a tool of advertising. While both consumer and producer appear to be completely aware of the processes taking place, does the consumer in particular acknowledge the implications? In effect, the bag becomes a travelling billboard, which perhaps, unconsciously is paraded until the consumer gets to their car or home. In essence, the practice becomes practiced to the stage of proficiency and/or unconsciousness and, as such, becomes routinized in a way that Foucault (1998) may suggest is 'the living itself'.

Modes of practice

The example of automatically placing a product in a bag also serves to express how modes of practice can be performed at the market, particularly as everyday routines. For example, producers may set up in the same place each month, or customers may attend the market at the same time each month. Of course, there are many intricate circumstances to be considered in just how routines become habituated. Nevertheless, repetitive behaviours do create unconscious movements, and performance and/or practice can often be transformed into unreflected habit (Revill 2004). The field journal entries describe how a typical market begins:

7:35 - The market place is relatively bare, a few pigeons pick up the remnants of last night's spilled fish and chips, a council worker helps them in cleaning up. People move hurriedly across the square, either in an effort to get to work or because of the cold.

7:40 - Market employees begin to erect stalls. Metal frames are assembled, slotted into each other creating a pattern of rectangle empty boxes. Then they are dressed! Boards for tables and stripped tarpaulin for roofs. Producers begin to arrive. The market organiser rushes here and there directing, orchestrating, building as she directs which producers go where - clipboard in hand.

7:45 - More and more producers arrive, pulling up in vans with producers' names and business on the sides, and some in unmarked vans with trailers. The atmosphere is jovial, as producers meet and greet each other.

Stuff is unloaded. Banners, cloths, displays are unfurled and positioned in a well rehearsed fashion - no checking - signs appear straight and central behind their stalls, as if by magic!

7:50 - Most of the produce is unloaded now; it remains in freezers- boxes, cardboard boxes, barrels, crates. Refrigeration display units are in place on the stalls, power supply is connected. Produce is laid out, again in a rehearsed manner.

8:00 - Ready to go! Products are out. Slowly customers begin to appear, not many.

8:45 - For the last 45 minutes the market has slowly come to life. Late producers arrive and hurriedly set up stalls, an amount of rearranging goes on as the market organiser slots the late arrivals into place. Customers buy with little fuss or conversation and seem to leave the market square hurriedly when finished purchasing. Probably on their way to work, judging from how they are dressed.

9:00 - The market begins in essence, visible lift in atmosphere and attendance. It's still cold though!

(Extract from field journal, Durham farmers' market, 20/1/05)

The patterns described here are repeated each month with slight variations to the script - not always were producers late or for that matter, did the same producers show up.¹²² Nevertheless, the emphasis is on established routines, for instance, producers who attend regularly are designated the same stalls by the market organizers.¹²³ Producers arrive at similar times each month, unload, and set up in an almost identical fashion. Stall positions exemplify an apparent hierarchy, in that stalls 1 to 8 (see Map 2) are favoured stalls due to high amounts of passing footfall - or what maybe described as the impulse-buying traffic. These modes of practice are paramount to how Durham market runs, as the choices made by market organisers and by producers and consumers conclusively construct how the market works. In essence, a number of unconscious components are at work here: the producers conduct their movements in an

¹²² Some producers attend seasonally – e.g. one vegetable producer attends October to March.

¹²³ Newcastle has a deliberate policy of rotating farmers' market producers and stall positions, Hexham and Durham do not and producers tend to go to the same stall positions.

everyday sense of turning up, setting up and working in a manner that is un-reflexive because it has been done tens of times before. While consumers approach the markets in repetitive ways, for some, they walk straight to produce they want, for others, they wander a little before buying. The emphasis is the practiced nature to each market, as seen from some consumers' comments:

... we do have a set pattern, because the meat sells out very quickly, so the meat is the priority, to get meat first of all... ¹²⁴

We have a look around first and then the beef, we usually go straight to him. ¹²⁵

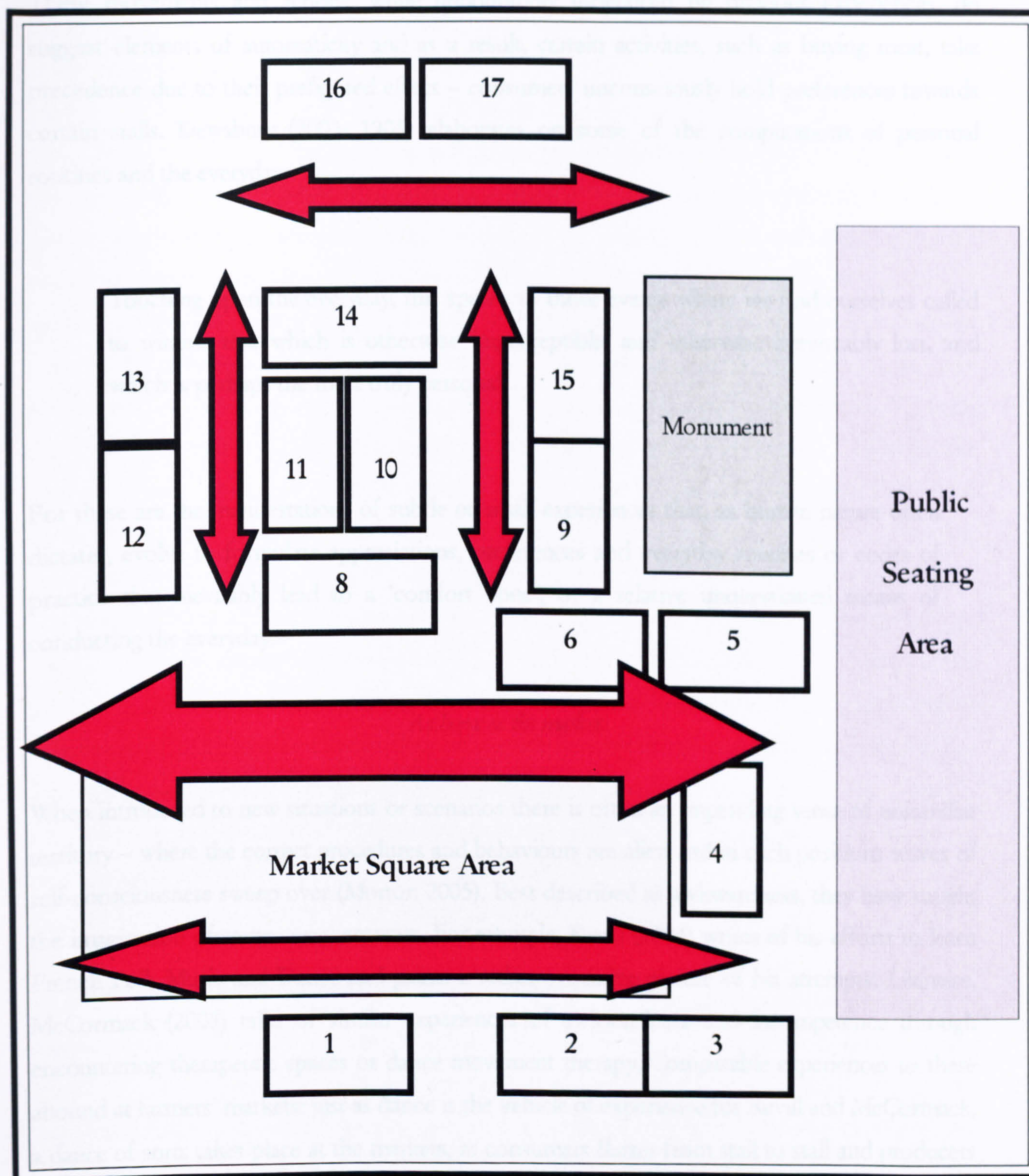
I don't browse mainly because I know what we are going to get. I go looking for a specific stall, maybe then I'll just take a look at what else there is. ¹²⁶

¹²⁴ A regular attendee at Hexham farmers' market has a grown family and buys for two (18/7/05).

¹²⁵ This couple are in semi-retirement and travel to as many farmers' markets as possible each month (averaging 8 a month). They buy from the markets at least once a week (1/7/05).

¹²⁶ A regular attendee at Hexham and an intermittent attendee at Newcastle farmers' market, mother of two young children (13/7/05).

Map 2: Durham Farmers' Market Layout



Key: Each farmers' market stall is numbered, the front of the stall faces where the arrows have been placed. The thicker the arrow the larger the amount of footfall witnessed during the course of one market.

(Source: author 20/1/05)

These movements and actions, while undoubtedly influenced by previous experiences, do suggest elements of automaticity and as a result, certain activities, such as buying meat, take precedence due to their prefigured effect – consumers unconsciously hold preferences towards certain stalls. Dewsbury (2003: 1908) elaborates on some of the computations of personal routines and the everyday:

Touching upon the everyday, this speaks to those events where we find ourselves called to witness that which is otherwise imperceptible, and otherwise irrevocably lost, and which is perhaps the most truly personal.

For these are the manifestations of subtle or small experiences that, as human nature often dictates, evolve to formulate appreciations, preferences and everyday routines or codes of practice that inevitably lead to a 'comfort zone', or a relative unquestioned means of conducting the everyday.

At home at the market

When introduced to new situations or scenarios there is often an impending sense of unfamiliar territory – where the correct procedures and behaviours are alien and in such positions waves of self-consciousness sweep over (Morton 2005). Best described as awkwardness, they have caught the imagination of some commentators. For example, Revill (2004) writes of his efforts to learn French Folk Music and Dance and paints a rather evocative picture of his attempts. Likewise, McCormack (2003) talks of similar experiences of awkwardness and incompetence through encountering therapeutic spaces or dance movement therapy. Comparable experiences to these abound at farmers' markets: just as dance is the vehicle of experience for Revill and McCormack, a dance of sorts takes place at the markets, as consumers flutter from stall to stall and producers theatrically perform behind their stalls. The rules and practices of this dance are probably less definite but could easily be considered equally grounded.

Many actors at the farmers' market feel awkward and unsure during their first experiences and visits to the markets.¹²⁷ What one does, what one says, what one buys, are all puzzles that flood the thought processes. Most actors at the farmers' markets, if not all, are used to supermarket or small-shop shopping and the markets prove to be relatively different to the standard way of buying and selling (Hinrichs *et al.* 2004). Generally there is an enthusiastic producer behind the stall, absent are the neon lights, the cash registers, the piped music, the mild smell of cleaning detergents and most of all a degree of anonymity (Hinrichs, Gillespie, and Feenstra 2004). Taking the supermarket as the example, the shopper can examine, peruse and reflect upon their selection generally away from any form of contact with supermarket staff (Willis 1991). The first time they deal with staff may be at a checkout, whereas at the market, the producer is ever-present. Nonetheless, while a producer may be busy with customers or other things, their proximity can sometimes be intimidating. As a Newcastle consumer¹²⁸ commented, 'I'll stand there and think shall I go and get something... I am a bit of a timid shopper ... I'll stand at a distance taking a long time to get used to shopping'. As this consumer went on to elaborate, there can be an amount of fear when approaching a stall, particularly, a fear of animating ignorance or a lack of knowledge.¹²⁹ Buying at a farmers' market and the face-to-face style of personal contact requires an amount of practice and time in order for it to become familiar. As another consumer comments¹³⁰ on how she 'learned' to shop at the markets, '... it was probably a friend of mine, I have been taught how to appreciate buying local and emh, using small traders by a friend of mine who had always been very much into the environmental movement and that aspect of consumerism'. Nevertheless, the experience of awkwardness is usually short-lived in that actors normally immerse themselves in the experience and engage with the modes of practice at the markets.¹³¹

Actors become comfortable at the markets, which alleviates initial discomfort or self-consciousness and this change creates a degree of confidence in going to or doing a farmers' market. However, becoming 'at home' is reliant on repetition and commitment, in that regular attendance helps to ease such fears or worries. As Lefebvre (in Thrift 2000: 244) contemplates, '... upon the basis of acts repeated billions of times (practical, technical and social acts, like the

¹²⁷ Interviews: 28/6/05, 29/6/05, 5/7/05.

¹²⁸ An irregular attendee of Newcastle farmers' market, generally buys for one, or 'if her boyfriend is staying' for two (28/6/05).

¹²⁹ For example, this consumer is uncomfortable with buying meat because she doesn't know how to cook it.

¹³⁰ A regular Newcastle attendee, a retired teacher with grown family, buys for two (28/6/05).

¹³¹ Interviews: 22/1/05, 6/7/05, 14/7/05.

acts of buying and selling today), customs, ideological interpretations, cultures and lifestyles erect themselves'. Familiarity produces sensations that allow unreflexive emotions to ferment, as the energy consumed by not knowing or being unsure evaporates, so the sensory engagement embodies the experiences, for instance, encapsulated by buying and selling.

Even in situations of minimal social encounter when actors are uncertain of their surroundings, noticeable physiological responses ensue, particularly heart rate acceleration, increased facial muscle activity and increased skin conductance (Varma and Rollock 1998). Moreover, the reduction of such reactions is directly related to becoming familiar with the situation at hand, something often embodied through modes of practice. The practice of attending a farmers' market each month builds working knowledges that commonly map the mundane acts which signpost everyday lives. As Painter (2000: 242) suggests:

'Practice' refers to the ongoing mix of human activities that make up the richness of everyday social life. According to Bourdieu, social practice neither represents the working out of objective social laws operating, as it were, behind the scenes, nor stems from the independent subjective decision – making of free human beings.

When performing the everyday, we make our toast in a regular fashion, we walk down certain roads, we catch particular buses or sign our names in idiosyncratic ways because it's 'what life demands'. Fundamentally, actors' lives¹³² are a sedimentary mix of absolute mundanity with a sprinkle of difference or variety. For most people, each day presents similar or identical patterns to the previous day, week or month and through this repetitive cycle, we develop modes of practice and strategies, which work and 'get us through the day'. Occasionally something like a farmers' market presents newness or an oddity, something to be explored, yet with time this too becomes habituated and unreflexive. The more we practice, the more it becomes unconscious.

¹³² The lives spoken of here are Western European lives.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been the performance that takes place around buying food at farmers' markets. The performances take on the guise of the everyday, but equally they celebrate difference in that the markets awaken carnivalesque connotations, because inherently the markets are not everyday events. As explored throughout this chapter, farmers' markets generate what Hetherington might term a 'heterotopic space', where a marginal force imposes its ideals, however temporally, within the space appropriated by the market. Moreover, it is here that the assemblages congregate and propagate in a cultural, social, ethical or economic sense. Indeed, it is only in the presence of others that actors accentuate their identities in particular ways and quietly hide other identity aspects (Goffman 1971), in presenting identities that conform to stereotypes or realistically help to smooth economic transactions. This is not to say that the social element of the market is not equally as vibrant and coalescing; for some the theatricality of the market is its draw.

Inherent to most farmers' market performances is the corporeality that enacts a theatricality, sensuousness or carnivalesque to the event of buying, selling or just being there. Undoubtedly, the farmers' market is an event where performance allows:

Our enacting then, both through our speech acts, and our bodily performances that carry them forth, propose and create connections, which configure the 'object' allowed to materialise in discourse. In other words, both our thoughts (ideas) and action (practices) assemble the relations of human and nonhuman and announce the discourses through which we exchange and, through description, make our experiences meaningful.

(Dewsbury 2000: 477)

Performance and its delivery is distinctly corporeal and linguistic in projecting the meanings and understandings that engage everyday life, and performance is intrinsically inseparable from

identity, as every interaction and act between actors incorporates degrees of performance. As Goffman (1971) hints, our everyday presentation of the self owes its antecedents to multifarious experiences and situations but equally the 'here and now' can demonstrate how some of the performances play out. At farmers' markets the roles and performances played, in particular by producers, help to augment the interactions and actions between producers and consumers, because buying and selling is direct and the consumption process is understood in terms of this directness. Notwithstanding the fact that performativity is present in many practices of consumption (Kjellberg 2008) as argued, at the markets there is a different notion of performativity which highlights many of the subtleties and nuances of buying and selling at farmers' markets. The next chapter develops the concept of the 'here and now', and discusses how the networks and connections that form at a farmers' market sustain its continuity and durability.

Chapter 7

Durable moments: making the here and now – disconnections, invisible connections and reconnections

We know how to describe human relations, we know how to describe mechanisms, we often try to alternate between context and content to talk about the influence of technology on society or vice-versa, but we are not yet expert at weaving together the two resources into an integrated whole. This is unfortunate because whenever we discover a stable social relation, it is the introduction of some non-humans that accounts for this relative durability. The most productive way to create new narratives has been to follow the development of an innovation. Those recent histories allow one to go from powerless engineers to domination that is so complete that it has become invisible. It is now the landscape in which action and will flow effortlessly.

(Latour 1991: 111)

Chapter 6 explored issues of performance and routine at farmers' markets and considered their role in how markets function in an everyday sense. I now develop some of these notions with

regard to how some of the interactions and connections at the market operate. Walking around any farmers' market awakens curiosities as to who is at the market, as well as what is at the market. One finds oneself wondering what networks and influences are behind a person's purchases and the rhythms of banality that influence those purchases. Often what frames practiced methods of purchase are the relations, networks and connections that flavour the choices of a consumer and in many ways these practices remain relatively unconscious. To give one example, supermarkets would not exist in the same format without the invention of supermarket trolleys, a vital technology that allows the smooth running of this business. The landscape of the supermarket offers an example of how technology and people blend into a durable banality. Banality and stability are not the same thing, but in some ways, the two inherit similar traits. Latour (1991) contends that power and domination need a relatively stable platform to exert influence, but in the face of continued influences and 'new narratives' the more polymorphous the banality is, the more it becomes durable. Introducing new elements to any entity, of course, changes the fundamentals of that entity, but here lies the key, the fluidity and mobility of that entity ensures its capabilities and existence. Put simply, to blend human relations with non-human ones, it is necessary for both parties to be reasonably fluid and mobile. This chapter draws attention to the inanimate, animal and human actors at farmers' markets, which become absorbed in assemblages that enact a dynamic durability or, as suggested, durable moments. These moments are many and far reaching, as networks, connection and re-connections all serve to ensure the durability of the markets and keep the markets in the *here and now*.

Keeping markets in the here and now can be considered fundamental, for it is the channels, links or networks that manipulate, charm or homogenise the influences and actions that underscore everything that takes place at the markets. It is the technology that allows meat to be chilled in order for it to arrive at the market in pristine condition; it is the relations between producers and their staff that allow the business to run; it is the sheep at the farm that become produce to sell, and so on. The multifarious nature of such links makes it impossible to include every component of what makes a market tick or materialize, but what is highlighted is how essential such components are, and particularly, how these components coalesce or bind. There is fluidity and mobility to most relations at farmers' markets, much like a yacht that tacks from side to side; the relations are made 'through a series of movements and relative stabilities' (Hetherington 1997: 198). Durable moments provide a foundation and allow a window to view and value activities

that normally go unnoticed or become commonplace at the markets (Revill 2004).¹³³ As Thrift (2000b: 556) suggests of those moments:

... 'society' becomes a set of more or less durable networks of heterogeneous actors – or, more properly, 'actants' – who are able to produce more or less durable moments by forging connections. However, this durability arising out of difference requires something more than the simple conjunction of actors, it also requires the expressive power offered by embodiment and the other capacities of actors or the moment cannot be made afresh and active.

Creating, galvanising or continuing relations ensures opportunities for the markets to remain durable because these are the relations that make the markets happen. Moreover, these moments are important, because, in essence, they are the markets. Without these moments, the markets do not exist.

Durable moments engage farmers' markets, whether during the processes of production, during preparations for a market or during the markets. Within them, many relationships and connections abound; however, in the true sense of a relation it is impossible to dichotomize, for what precedes a market is indelible to the relations and practices at the markets. Therefore, this chapter alludes to these preceding moments that frame the markets, but its concerns lie with moments at the markets. There is a lasting ephemerality to the markets, where because the markets occur once a month some relations are suspended for the rest of the month. In the meantime, life for the actants carries on and in the absence of relations, for example between producer and consumer, there can be a shift or change in the pattern of some of the relations. For instance, a wave of enthusiasm that was absent the previous month may become evident at a market. This, as often is the case, may be the result of some form of moral panic or media drive relating to food or health, for example, buying fresh local vegetables may be good for the environment because it reduces food miles.

¹³³ As suggested in preceding chapters, farmers' market actors are reflexive in how they view, understand and perform the markets; however, there are times when actions and comprehensions become superseded by habit, routine and/or unconsciousness and this is what is drawn upon in much of this chapter.

This chapter begins by reviewing notions of disembeddedness and its role in the way the markets move from more conventional food production and processes. It also considers how issues of difference offer new or different networks and degrees of material mobility. There is ambiguity to how the markets' durable moments operate and within this, this thesis explores the juxtapositions of what can often be viewed as incompatible contexts. Through mobility, such impositions blend into the social assemblages that engage the markets, particularly through actant-led networks - human and non-human. The chapter then explores some of the connections in evidence at the market and develops or problematizes what can be a hybrid of embeddedness and disembeddedness, for example, the issue of distance can be a notion that is simultaneously comforting and disturbing all at once. Finally, the chapter focuses on questions of embeddedness and the slippages that are accommodated in some of the relationships and networks at the markets. The slippages focus on the disruption of dominant discourses in the power relations of consumption (Gregson and Rose 2000). Paying particular attention to the moral and ethical concerns of consumers and producers, the chapter moves through the power relations and motivations of farmers' market actants and reviews how the relations at the markets are structured by attitudes and understandings of what is being bought and sold.

Disembedding from conventional food processes

Similitude involves the juxtaposition of things not usually found together, or which have no ordered meaning together and the ambiguity that they create in terms of representation. Similitude sets up a heterotopic space. Similitude is a form of bricolage, it signifies like a metonym rather than a metaphor, like that explored by Magritte in his paintings. In similitude meaning is dislocated and then relocated, skating across a surface through a series of deferrals that are established between signifier and signified.

(Hetherington 1997: 186)

The assemblages that occur at farmers' markets in many instances produce juxtapositions that offer alterity or something different to those who attend farmers' markets (see previous chapters). Finding something unusual, like a producer selling directly, may question what processes ensure their compatibility in what normally would seem to be an odd situation. As Hetherington (above) suggests, it is a bricolage, where in many ways a patch-work encompasses varied influences in building associations and indeed, 'deferrals' in presenting situations that are not conducted in isolation, but rather through a mix of images, ideas and realities. Hetherington builds on Baudrillard's (1983) notions of simulacra where realities become inseparable from their representation, an imitation of something that never existed, a phantasm. Moreover, he hints at Barthes' (1964) semiological musings, which equally convey notions that what is real owes more to 'myths' and the signs that generate the representations.

As previously explored (see Chapter 5 & 6), for farmers' market attendees the representations that frame understandings and appreciations of the markets allow processes to take place that may not be something that is experienced on an everyday level, for instance purchasing something out-doors. Just like Magritte and his pipe, the markets displace particular representations and constitute notions that are grounded in a distinct reality. In essence, the markets become what attendees wish them to be, for example, places to buy something of high quality, somewhere to meet people, or places in which to be entertained. The (re)presentations projected in such a way reconstitute notions of what the markets are, both in how attendees view the markets and in how they actively experience them. While the markets are tangible, as are their products, the associations they appropriate are not, and, as such, the markets produce mobile realities or materialities that are mobilized in configuring and reconfiguring how they perform and exist within certain contexts (Hetherington 1997). What may appear solid is easily transferable, as thoughts and representations at farmers' markets are open to influences – think of a food scare or the heightened awareness of something like bird flu or foot and mouth and how this may impact on food sales and/or public opinion (Law 2006). In these instances, the representations are mobilized and ostensibly situated within an entirely different spectrum; the similitude becomes disassociated and re-associated in light of something like a moral panic or public opinion.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ As touched on in Chapter 2, the intention is to broaden some of the more staid economic models or financial models (for a fuller argument, see Martin 1994; Callon 1998, 2005; Miller 1998c, 2002; Uzzi 1999; Holm 2003). Much as Curry (2002) suggests, in terms of the UK agricultural industry, an awareness of added-value or

To take just one example, much media attention of late has focused on food miles and the dramatic effects this has on the environment (Pretty et al. 2005) and, as a result, issues of localism have come to the fore for many consumers, both those who attend markets and those who do not. The underlying assumption of long-distance imported food as being unnecessary and wasteful prevails, whereas farmers' market food is understood as being local with less impact on the environment and it celebrates local customs or culture rather than corroding them. As one consumer¹³⁵ argues with regard to these issues:

... I think part of the problem with the food chain is that there is so many people involved and I think it is much better if you could just get it down... there is [sic] too many middle men, you should get down to the people who just make things... it is so much more preferable, 'cause then you can feed-back about it and it's just so much less complicated. I also don't agree with shipping things halfway across the world, that's probably my biggest motive [in attending the markets], I just think that it is farcical; I think it is treating the poor countries very badly. World trade I am dead against because of the influence it has on the poor people and the influence it has on the environment. I think it is a farce eating apples from South Africa and New Zealand when we have allowed our orchards all to be cut down and we are not making cider and more... we are losing our own culture, it is as though we have never had a brilliant one, we are losing it for something which is an inferior product, usually. Especially fruit and vegetables, it's just not up to the same standards. Fruit withers before it even ripens nowadays. A lot of the time, especially if it is peaches and stuff, I'd rather go back to days where we could go to a strawberry farm, pick them in season and maybe freeze them. So that's how I feel and that's one of the reasons why I am so interested in this and I'm really interested in promoting it. So I love countries like France where they're still producing their stuff and I love it for the fact that they have got the traditions and they refuse to let them go. Whereas we are just losing everything that we have got.

new agricultural practices is needed. The farming industry that often works in isolation from social compatibility is regularly understood and reviewed through economic and agricultural models (see Marsden et al. 1996; Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999; Lowe and Ward 2007). As MacKenzie (2005) suggests, what is needed is an opening of the 'black boxes' of financial and economic theory (see 2005).

¹³⁵ Attends Newcastle farmers' market, shops for one (28/6/05).

Tied up within the views of this consumer are some of her shopping philosophies and what she has witnessed at other more local or international levels. Short food chains for her are positive and world trade less so; in many ways her argument summarizes the ethos of farmers' markets (see Chapter 4) and how they play out for consumers. As Jackson et al. (2006: 139) have noted, the 'promotion of local and regional foods is based on the assumption that production on this scale is likely to be more sustainable than more intensive forms of farming on larger scales'. Exhibiting reconnections to local produce rather than those at supermarkets engages with concepts that emanate from specific strategies, as exemplified in the UK Government Cabinet Office report 'Farming and Food – a Sustainable Future' (better known as the Curry Report), which was conceived as a response to the UK outbreak of Foot & Mouth Disease in 2001. The report's objective was to 'reconnect farming with its market and the rest of the food chain' (2002: 6). Farmers' market food is generally immersed in agency (for example through direct sales or links to production) and for many consumers issues of agency focus their attention on farmers' market food or more generally farming and British food. Built-in agency is an optimal way to enhance food or add value. The Curry Report stresses the inputs of farmers in both production and retail and the increased need to reconnect 'farmers and the public through the marketplace' (Curry 2002: 107).

The Curry Report, and others like it (Agenda21 2002; FARMA 2004), offer viable incentives to producers at the market in reconfiguring businesses affected by adverse situations (the majority of north east farmers' market producers began trading post-Foot & Mouth) and for consumers they provide an awareness to the benefits of local shopping. The intention of the Curry Report was to draw attention to the possibilities for the British food industry, particularly the farming industry, and held within such emphasis is the representation of UK food as being exceptional. As the report suggests, 'consumers have confidence in English food', and a connection between the actors involved with the food and those that consume it adds to its value and appreciation. Entwined within this appreciation is the understanding of what the product is and its potential use, for to understand the mobility of the product it must be grounded within a spectrum of value. However, the value that grounds is easily shifted and mobilized. For instance, just as localism is the pretext to many consumers' attendance at the market one month, the following month it may be issues revolving around something like childhood obesity. In essence, when

actors employ networks or policy in appreciating systems and/or values (or for that means any type of system imaginable) what ensue are reflections of power, where systems become located within structures that are open to control or persuasion. Lockie (2002: 280) expands on the concept in relation to food production and consumption, and explores how the two rarely sit in isolation - power is the property that binds:

The 'sovereign-subject' metaphor of power that underlies attempts to locate the locus of control within 'food systems' is fatally flawed. Understanding power, as Foucault argues, requires us 'to cut off the King's head' and to acknowledge that power is unstable, reversible, pervasive and, as often as not, accompanied by resistance and evasion.

In fact, the agency and power embodied in some of the foods at farmers' markets highlights how the foods are viewed by farmers' market producers and consumers and, without the context of the markets, the foods quickly become nothing more than mere objects. In isolation, food provides little value or use; it is only when power or agency are applied that farmers' market food becomes subjectified. Food is understood through what can be construed as its mobility. Without the circuits, networks or chains, food falls into a nondescript or meaningless remit. However, this type of dissociation is never total, as Latour (1991: 110) argues, 'we are never faced with objects or social relations, we are faced with chains which are associations of human and non-humans'. For example, a farmers' market sausage, which looks and feels like a mainstream or non-market sausage, gains status because it is consumed as something different to a mainstream sausage. The sausage changes through mobility - it is understood because of the power and agency invested in it, for this is where and how the product gains 'added-value' or is understood, as one consumer stated, because it has 'that something extra' (see Chapter 5).

Material mobility

For the object is not a thing, nor even a category; it is a status of meaning and a form.

(Baudrillard 1981: 185)

Objects and their movements enliven senses of ambiguity as the meanings and understandings of something that is relatively inanimate suddenly, or not so suddenly, becomes engorged with form, through its presence or its associations within certain contexts or environments. In the UK where multinational companies generally rule the seas of commercialism, there is an abstraction that formulates many values. For instance, a papaya sold in a UK supermarket is sold in isolation from its Jamaican grove or from the Jamaican hands that picked it (Cook 2004). While it could be argued that such a fruit is often presented in supermarkets with rather museum-like display cards that describe the product and its origins, even then it still creates a commodity fetish in realizing an exoticism that relinquishes many of the stories connected to that papaya production (Willis 1991). As Baudrillard argues, the use/value or the fetishism that constitutes a commodity owes much to the abstracted social norms that equate the object with its form or being. As he suggests, 'not all cultures produce objects' (Baudrillard 1981: 185), but for those cultures that do, the object is often reduced to a commodity or a value and, as such, generates social and cultural comprehensions. The symbolic value of the object at hand, as well as its more practical value or appreciation, combine in producing an evaluation system where the object, in this case food, is never viewed in relative isolation. In more general terms, the object moves from its inherent beginnings and is consumed in separation from its mode of production or even place of production, but is still viewed within a register that can often discount something like origins. Willis (1991: 52) suggests the consumer is often like the child whose thoughts of production are in many ways erased:

While we are told that cows make milk and bananas grow on trees, biological simplicity belies the complex reality of the highly rationalized system of production defined by multinational capitalism. The multinational is distant and unknowable while its logo is

concrete and visible. This is the topsy-turvy logic of capitalism which promotes and depends upon a naïve consumer.

Willis, much like Cook (2004), advocates the link between food and globalisation which highlights food as a mobile commodity - as Willis stresses, this mobility is often at the expense of the naïve consumer. However, farmers' markets do offer a counter movement or reconnection to some of the issues highlighted. Indeed, farmers' market food, just like the papaya, is mobile; farmers' market products combine a materiality that awakens a commodity fetishism built upon reconnecting or removing the distance between production and a commodity (see Chapter 2). While the Jamaican papaya rarely exudes the hum and toil of the hot sorting shed on a Jamaican farm, the farmers' market pork sausage, for example, does offer a window into how the sausage came into being, if nothing else because you can ask the producer who stands in front of you. Nevertheless, as Jackson *et al.* (2006: 132) suggest with regard to commodity circuits, 'analysis should recognise that origins are always constructed', the construction in this case being an alternative to that offered by the supermarkets or globalisation.

Also of significance, as Castree proposes, is that 'commodity analysis must surely go beyond an empirical accounting for the plethora of material and symbolic consequence that commodities-in-motion have' (2004: 31). As Castree argues, there is no escaping the fact that the movement of objects, particularly food, follows deliberate lines of dispersal and use (see Chapters 2, 4 & 5). However, what farmers' market produce undergoes in addition is a symbolic journey or mobility that hinges on an element of alterity, or affiliations counter to those understood within the remits of the supermarkets or globalisation. As Hetherington (1997) has suggested, with notions of similitude there are relationships and connections and how these are performed and arranged fold 'into being through the significations that emanate from those material arrangements' (1997: 187). The patterns of mobility and the effect of those at farmers' markets derive from a materiality beyond, as Baudrillard (1981) puts it, 'a meta-political economy'. The labour of dissection and abstraction that engages UK society may be impossible to arrest, but where aesthetic or systematic value underlies the transparency of the material and its function, what can be understood is the 'ideal articulation' of the process (Baudrillard 1981). In understanding how a farmers' market sausage incorporates added-value, as highlighted in the 'Curry Report', there is a rationalization to such articulations and in turn, this highlights the shortcomings within the

status of a material or object in isolation from its functionality. The pattern that the sausage follows is within a circuit, but one borne out of visibility or transparency where, despite the slaughtering of the pig taking place in a remote setting from the farmers' market, the production of its meat is not so far removed as to be deemed separate. Instead, accessibility, alterity and aesthetic appreciations structure the dynamic of the circuit as well as the interaction between consumers and producers at the markets, and in that sense it is not too dissimilar to the supermarket or global forces, except the message that surrounds the object is different.¹³⁶

Commodities, to all intents and purposes, follow similar patterns and flows, but what can often distinguish these patterns are the stories drawn into the patterns. These lubricate the transference of objects and material from place to place or from one style of appreciation to the next (see Chapter 5). Vehicles like the media propel and sustain durability, for instance, farmers' markets attractiveness to many would-be consumers and producers. Creating fetishized commodities is by its very nature difficult to maintain as the momentum needs constant supervision, but alleviating commodities from the normal relies on the processes of durable moments where visibility and theatricality, for instance, often render markets and their products something worth buying into (see Chapter 5). Tied into such activities are patterns of mobility that, in effect, allow materials to move, flow or transfer as products sustain their appeal, or even materiality, to the agents that act in networks such as those at farmers' markets.

Networks

... anything can potentially have the power to act, whether human or non-human, and the semiotic term 'actant' is used to refer to this symmetry of powers

(Philo and Wilbert 2000: 17)

Everyday life owes much to the durable networks that facilitate the movements and interactions of that life. In maintaining the durability of something like a farmers' market, actants and objects are essential in enlivening or generating the movements and actions necessary to keep the

¹³⁶ In no way do I presume local always means good or better. As Donaldson argues, there are often politicized motives in how the local can be represented and as such there is a risk of the local being fetishized for political, social, cultural or regional means (see Donaldson 2006).

markets in a state of 'being' or 'becoming'. Markets and food rely on freshness, colour, vibrancy to project notions and representations of the here and now, for this is what is expected of foodstuffs. Food is grounded in expectations of particular qualities or evaluations. Farmers' market produce must deliver appetizing and attractive products. Not to do so would encourage consumers to shop elsewhere, as one consumer¹³⁷ mentions when asked what she looks for in farmers' market product: 'first impressions I suppose, and something well presented'. Also intertwined within these thoughts are such things as, for example, money, the weather, processing technology and a whole host of other connections; as Latour sums it up, technology is society made durable (1991). In highlighting actants and networks there is an obvious link to Actor Network Theory (ANT) in exposing the human and non-human relations that exist at the markets, and how these implicate both connections and distance, or encourage, in the words of Serres and Latour (1995) an inside/outside distinction where boundaries become indistinguishable.

Murdoch (1997) welcomes the complication of such boundaries as the human and non-human and as he suggests ANT is 'co-constructionist' in its attempts to bring entities and relations together. In such light, this thesis engages with debates as to how animals integrate and provide durability to farmers' markets. Meat and animal by-products (such as eggs, milk or cheese) are what draw consumers to the markets (the majority of farmers' market consumers spoken to buy meat at farmers' markets, see appendices). What lingers beneath the surface are appreciations of meat, animals, animal husbandry and meat production; while no live animals appear at the markets, they do provide a presence of sorts. Animal-human relations underscore a number of practices at the markets and, as Philo (1998) has suggested, animals present inclusions and exclusions in much the same way as minority human groups or societies. However, as Philo stresses, his concern is with how animals have been pushed into human discourses or, in short, the tenacity and complication of moving between exclusion and inclusion – dogs are typical in our lives, yet lions are not (Philo 1998). Nevertheless, such boundaries and categories do become 'scrambled', and produce the juxtaposition of animal-human relations. As Probyn (1996: 13) suggests in order 'to bring what seems far away close up', such relations need consideration. The farmers' markets involve animal discourses and networks that almost superimpose a sense of something not being in the right place (a farm animal in a city square) upon that which is relatively normal (the animal in the city is normalized - albeit in the form of meat). The

¹³⁷ Regularly attends Hexham farmers' market, one teenage daughter, buys for two (6/7/05).

juxtaposition here lies within how an animal in an unexpected place disturbs 'time-space coordinates' (Whatmore 2002) by offering, in essence, the outside and inside all at once. The animal becomes the market, the transaction or the producer, because the market subsumes and absorbs the animal to the extent that in many ways it is camouflaged within the market.

This juxtaposition compares with Deleuze and Guttari's (2003) rhizomatic observations, because in many ways animals are grounded at the markets and they are embedded in the processes and practices of farmers' markets. Hidden beneath the surface is a labyrinth of networks and within these lie the binding forces of the markets. As Whatmore (2002: 124) suggests in connection to food chains and their lines of direction and supply:

In place of the straight lines and orderly sequences of food chains, *filières* and systems which project originary points of production through frictionless trajectories to terminal points of consumption, the geographies mapped here are more turbulent and more attentive to the multiplicity of possible paths 'in-between' where things pick up speed and take on consistencies and directions of their own.

Serres and Latour (1995) also suggest that it is the heterogeneity of influences and materials in any given situation that produces new or different experiences, places and/or phenomena. 'The variability, the polyvocality of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography' (Deleuze & Guttari 2003:382). Bringing together heterogeneous effects at farmers' markets creates instances where animals are conceived not as inside/outside but as something more incontrovertible; they are one aspect of the root system that the markets 'contain'. The animals pass through the market, but remain part of the market's 'absolute' (Deleuze & Guttari 2003). The assemblages of farmers' markets are sustained by the traces, such as traceability of a product or the practices of the markets, where the existence of the farmers' market network relies on the constant formations that engage the networks and paths of the markets. Indeed, as Philo (2005: 825) suggests, what often underlies ANT is an appreciation of the 'conceptual orderings that humans place over the 'chaos' of the world', and, in this manner, everything is rarely seen in terms of a category or definition. Distinctions often have a tendency to merge and create hybridity. Human/non-human relations at the markets

potentially unhinge the rationality of buying an object through creating subjective links and in essence complicating the roles and symmetry of the actants at farmers' markets, as compared to more conventional form of buying and selling. Such connections and networks highlight the disembedded nature of buying something like a papaya at a supermarket or a distancing from the means of production, such as the slaughtering of a pig for sausage meat. The markets, their produce, the animals, the farmers and the consumers are inherently a part of the rhizomatic system that supports or underpins the assemblage and congestion of the social, cultural or economic being of farmers' markets. On balance, the manifestations that lie under the surface are the durable properties necessary to maintain a cohesive and structured existence, which allows the here and now to persevere.

Problematizing (invisible) connections

And still, we regain the durability of social assemblage, but it is shared with the non-humans thus mobilized.

(Latour 1991: 129)

Linking or superimposing the human and non-human has been widely problematized (see Murdoch 1997, Philo 1998, Whatmore 2002) and the argument of this chapter runs in conjunction with this. The blending or hybridization of components at the markets is a phenomenon that is influential in ensuring durability for farmers' markets. Thus, one style of embeddedness and disembeddedness between animals and markets is used here to demonstrate how the echo or the resonance of the animal is activated at the markets. The animal, as mentioned, does not appear at the market as a living entity; however, its body parts or meat do. The presentations and/or representations of the animal illuminate how it connects the stall at the market to the farm, as well as the reality that the meat for sale was once an animal rather than a clinically distanced product. While, as discussed below, neatly packaged meat creates an amount of alienation or disembeddedness between the consumer and the source of the product, in many

ways the displays at the stalls or the presence of the farmer embraces a connection between the human and the non-human.

Traceability and links between consumer and product have been championed of late in reducing risk and raising awareness of local issues (Opara and Mazaud 2001; Holloway et al. 2007). As de Certeau (1984) highlights, in an ever more clinical world, if the product labelling dictates a date of consumption or the weight of the product, who are we to question it? Nevertheless, something like traceability offers a connection - a link to the product, a place of origin and a face behind the product - a ploy now readily employed by supermarkets and multinationals where producers are often pictured and named on labelling (see Picture 11 & 12).¹³⁸ In evidence, here is the comforting effect of knowing, specifically knowing where it comes from. Connecting a consumer with a product or the product's manufacturer/producer enlivens a representation that is formulated to ease apprehensions within the contexts of moral panics such as BSE or Avian Flu. The labelling suggests safety because it is traceable. This is much in line with the farmers' markets where seeing and meeting the producer face-to-face can present many of the same connotations. Linking a product to a face and a market offers certain reassurance (Hinrichs, Gillespie, and Feenstra 2004), for example knowing a producer gives some indication as to the treatment of an animal, something one consumer suggests is very important to her.¹³⁹

... with meat I take how well the animal has been treated into consideration, I heard a radio programme about how they rear chickens, this was probably about twenty years ago and I have never be able to buy anything like chicken nuggets or anything like that since, it was so disgusting how they treated these chickens and how they literally did run around after their heads had been cut off for a few paces.

In considering this consumer's remarks, of interest is how animals participate at the markets in a 'humane' sense. Tied to a purchase for this woman is the knowledge that when the animal was alive it was reared 'happily'. What lies beneath the surface is, once again, a working knowledge of the connectivity at the markets and how non-human presences transfer within this context. How

¹³⁸ In Waitrose's and Moy Park's advertising there is the potential problem of local and distance, as well as disconnection. As Morris and Buller (2003) question (see Chapter 2), if the farmer is within, say, 30 miles are they good and if they are within 40 miles are they bad?

¹³⁹ Newcastle farmers' market attendee, grown family, buys for two (27/6/05).

an animal lived is a prerequisite in choosing a product and a farmer/producer who demonstrates that their business considers these matters is one that will appeal to this consumer.

Picture 11: Waitrose Milk



(Source: author 22/5/07)

Picture 12: Moy Park Chicken Fillets

Moy park

cooks in less than **30 mins**

less than **2% FAT**

One of our farmers **Seamus Mullin**
 Seamus has been rearing chickens on his farm in Pomeroy, County Tyrone for 8 years. He regularly checks his flocks as bird welfare is a priority. This helps him achieve the high standards required by Moy Park.

CHICKEN BREAST FILLETS no skin or bone

(Source: author 22/5/07)

Product traceability is a strategy employed by supermarkets, but this too can be evidenced at farmers' markets. One producer in particular exemplifies how similar approaches manifest at farmers' markets. The producer in question specializes in buffalo meat, a product he originally became aware of because of his son's allergy to cow's milk.¹⁴⁰ This interest grew to the extent that his farm now has a herd of 250 buffalo and the business sells at about 10 different markets in the north east per month. At the farmers' markets, this producer's stall displays a range of buffalo products (from meat to cheese). However, of note is the backdrop to his stall. The backdrop includes pictures of the farm and amongst these are various pictures of family members on the farm. Prominent amongst these on one of the days I spoke to him at the markets was Daisy. When asked about it, the farmer told me Daisy was the animal that had been slaughtered in preparation for that particular market and when asked by consumers he would point her out as being the very animal they were about to purchase. The picture, he informed me, changed from market to market, as each animal was slaughtered, but with a herd of over 250

¹⁴⁰ Interview: 10/1/05.

animals it is hard to keep track of all the names and generally the animal only receives a name once chosen for slaughter. (There are exceptions to this, as his children often have favourites who receive early names.) Undoubtedly this is a marketing tool, but it does demonstrate how a personalized link between human and non-human manifests at the market in actively drawing attention to the very animal about to be consumed, and moving the meat from an almost objective to subjective comprehension.

In many ways, buying meat is visual and tactile (see Chapter 4), in the sense that attention is usually focused on how the meat looks or its weight. The realization that this was once a living thing is often sanitised to the extent that it remains relatively secondary to consideration. However, in this instance, the visual appreciation of the meat is instantly reconnected to its original being; the farmer encourages a direct contact between beast and buyer. 'Daisy goes to market' is a reconstructed or representative format and is reconstituted as a real living thing, and a product for sale at the market. Channelling appreciations and understanding in such ways allows a reawakening or reconnection in that the origins of the product are there for all to see, and are celebrated in a very direct manner. As the pictures behind the stall do not present a generic image of a buffalo or cow but one that is now lying on the stall in front of the producer and consumer, there is a closure of distance between beast and consumer. However, how Daisy is constructed and understood is relatively abstract in nature and issues of distance are important in exploring how, while farmers' market consumers are framed as reflexive in their approach to food, there are also moments enhanced by disembeddedness and distance.

Distance

There are various degrees of social embeddedness in all food supply systems.

(Ilbery and Maye 2005: 827)

Philo (1998) recounts the sights and sounds of animals in 19th century London as they were driven into the city for markets. Using archival records, he draws out the historical contexts of how animals faded from city life and how the moral codes of the day asserted disapproval

towards animals in the city.¹⁴¹ During the past two centuries, animals in the city were a common sight: in an era when access to transport was limited, animals were simply walked or driven (meaning herded) to market. These markets were invariably located in the city centre. The resulting mayhem that often ensued when animals were driven along the city streets raised concerns and apprehensions for both public and animal safety and began what is now a relative zone of exclusion for most farm animals. Large cities, in general terms, are not welcoming places for animals; in a controlled and relatively ordered environment, cities no longer welcome the commotion associated with running animals down city streets.¹⁴² Instead, farm animals are kept to the peripheries and, as such, this exacerbates or generates a distance between most cities and their relations to animals.¹⁴³ As Philo (1998: 60) suggests:

... the presence of livestock in cities is often contested, since city dwellers commonly object to such animals being part of the urban scene because of amongst other problems, the 'odours, flies and unseemly sights associated with animal husbandry'.

Added to this could be the absence of abattoirs and the absence of animal auctions in most UK towns and cities, as well as the untold pressures on urban land use, which in effect, has allowed the presence of animals in the city to evaporate. Notwithstanding the lack of purpose as to why an animal should be in the city, what does emerge is the absence of farm animals from the cityscape, and from the everyday lives of urban dwellers. For, in many senses, the UK population has become anaesthetized or clinically removed from farm animals and the by-products of these animals. As one farmers' market producer¹⁴⁴ elaborated, 'there is a lost generation who doesn't really know the basic mechanics of farming and farm animals'. The same producer then elaborated on a story relating to his stall; as part of a sales promotion, he engineered a model udder, where it was the intention to allow children to see what it was like to milk a cow:

¹⁴¹ This of course was often with just reason, as for instance the eradication of TB or improvements in general health coincided with the exclusion of animals from cities – something Victorian Britain considered as a more 'utopian dream of a city of health' (see Cassedy 1962).

¹⁴² Notable exceptions are festivals, where this is actively encouraged, for example the running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. However, I refer to the presence of an animal in an everyday context, which festivals are not. In addition, animals (or animal effluent) in the city can occasionally be the centre of protest, for instance when run to the doors of government offices (see news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/488503.stm or news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/politics_show/6271025.stm).

¹⁴³ Once again, what is referred to here is a UK context; outside of the UK and indeed more western contexts such constructs are not as prevalent.

¹⁴⁴ Interview: 11/1/05.

... we noticed it with that cow you made up [referring to his wife who was present at interview], cows milks... it was just made out of this MDF stuff, and we put a plastic bucket on the back of it and the children could milk it, you know. There were four teats, from a rubber glove; we just cut holes at the end of the fingers. But some of the kids never knew where the milk was coming from and things like that, that's terrible, you know. I think there are generations where people don't know, it's sad.

Within a generation or two, a working knowledge or familiarity with farm animals and their products has evidently deteriorated. The point emphasised is not a polemic on educational or governmental issues but rather the dramatic impacts of animal exclusions in relation to some of the UK population. Even among farmers' market consumers there appears to be a chasm of dissociation. It would be easy to state that this is only evident in urban settings, but as witnessed, even within settings that are more rural, many consumers at farmers' markets are unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable with the finer details of animal husbandry, meat production and the roles animals play in the networks of farmers' markets.

There is a risk here of romanticising the presence of animals in the city, for the eradication of animals from 19th and 20th century urban centres certainly helped in improving hygiene and general states of health (see footnote 141). However, within notions of distance there are also issues of trust. Weber (1968) considers the comforting nature of impersonal trust created by distance, in that the moral localized contexts of, for instance, the 'backslapping' (or intimate bonds of everyday actions) amongst traders and consumers is invisible. As Shapiro (1987:639 & 635) suggests, 'organisations establish regulations to create role distance or to diminish role conflicts that often compromise fiduciary conduct ... [and] ... even though they are dealing with strangers, these principals nonetheless put their lives, their fortunes, and their understandings of the world at considerable risk'. Applying this to the context of a farmers' market there is an assurance, and a justifiable one, in having meat packaged in clean plastic, as it reduces the potential of ill health and instils confidence that the product in question has met a certain standard, for instance those set by Environmental Health and Trading Standards. Nevertheless,

this does add to a distancing effect or a compromise in knowledge transfer, expertise and power, with regard to food and its production (see De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998).¹⁴⁵

At play here are issues related to control and fidelity. With reference to Law's (1986) work on control from a distance, the distance created between farmers' market consumers and animals or the processes of meat production echoes, as Law states, the material of long-distance control. As suggested, there is a clinical distancing between the consumer and the farm animal: most consumers see (or do not see), feel and smell farm animals through products that have been reduced to shrink wrapped products. Any resonance of farm life is removed with the sterility of the plastic covering that is ubiquitous for the meat products on sale at farmers' markets. To display meat and sell it uncovered would be in violation of Health and Safety laws, and such institutions of power and control condition much of what a consumer expects and is liable to confront at the markets. By wrapping the meat, a type of sterilization occurs that removes the meat, and the blood, from the consumer; there is a barrier, an exclusionary membrane, between human and non-human at that moment of interaction.¹⁴⁶ Law's emphasis is in relation to Portuguese imperialism and how a number of components made it possible for a central force to control the peripheries (his reference is with the Portuguese trade links to India), and Law (1986: 261) states:

For documents, devices and people have in common that, placed in the right structure, they are potentially mobile, durable and able...to act upon that structure. Of course, they do retain these characteristics under all circumstances.

Framing the chains and networks between Portugal and India is, as he sees it, a special aspect of durability and fidelity, where travelling to the periphery and retaining an allegiance to initial goals and influence is a prerequisite for maintaining power at a distance. Equally, for farmers' market consumers there are aspects of power transferred over distance and maintained by trust or fidelity.¹⁴⁷ Control of meat and animals is maintained with a view to ensuring a working relationship between the animal and its final or ultimate consumer, where the workings of the

¹⁴⁵ Also, see section 'power relations and simple knowledges' in this chapter.

¹⁴⁶ The focus here is on the moment of interaction between consumer and animal; obviously, the human/non-human interaction between farmer and animal is somewhat different, but it is the distance between non-farmer and non-human that illuminates this best.

¹⁴⁷ Fidelity in the sense of remaining true to the cause, the cause in this case of staying within the remits and ethos of farmers' markets.

farmer and his animal are correlated to uphold specific standards. When a consumer arrives at a farmers' market, they have been moderately conditioned to expect meat of a certain quality or standard. In essence, there is uniformity in the UK with regard to the presentation of animal products and, as a result, unpacked or exposed meat is viewed as unusual.¹⁴⁸ As de Certeau (1998: 208) contends, 'to do one's shopping, one really has to *love reading* and know how to decipher labels'. However, what is at issue here is that the animal, even though distanced, in many ways is subject to the power of the consumer, but the consumer is not aware of or possibly has lost their direct link to the animal. The direct line has been interrupted with labels or plastic wrapping and the networks between the human/non-human now embody much more besides a simple commodity chain. There is, as Law (1986) suggests, a combination of raw materials that actors utilize in controlling over a distance, and in the context of the farmers' markets the mobility and durability of the relations between animals and humans is somewhat distanced. Nevertheless, producer and consumer are ultimately connected, particularly when the final purchase is made, for however distant the relationship may be at the moment of sale, there is a link or network set in motion.

Embedding - slippages and motivations

Animals highlight one of the many connections in evidence at the markets and, as such, they serve to suggest a juxtaposition - one when alterity and non-alterity (or convention) combine. Animals at farmers' markets suggest inclusion and exclusion within the confines of what is seen as standard practice or the norm at such events. In a comparable review, Gregson and Rose (2002) offer examples of the gender-specific roles evident at car-boot sales, where buying and selling usually correlates with a gendered stereotype - for example, men concentrate on DIY items, women on items of clothing. As Gregson and Rose suggest, caught within these norms is a performance that replicates and reproduces 'the hetero norms and dominant understandings of gender' (2002: 445). These lie in the degrees of expertise that become associated with masculine

¹⁴⁸ Animal products 'unpacked' can be seen in many butcher shops or delicatessen counters in supermarkets, but even here there is a degree of packing, as the product is generally displayed behind a glass cabinet and the food is seldom touched or examined by the consumer before purchase. In most instances, the product is purchased in a plastic bag.

or feminine identities and the hidden power-relations that bind such gender stereotyping. For instance, a woman's knowledge of household detergents is likely to be superior to a man's and, therefore, she is less likely to be swindled when buying such things (Gregson and Rose 2002). However, Gregson and Rose are keen to promote the notion of slippages, where normal power relations are in some form or shape disturbed.

The misplacement of an expectation or the predictability of shopping experiences are in some ways resisted or discontinued at farmers' markets, and here infused within the market's processes is a performance of social and cultural intensity. What often overrides the norms is a power relation built on alterity and difference. The experience of consumption at a farmers' market is different to the one enjoyed at more conventional retail spaces and as a result normative conventions become re-inscribed with new or distinctive meanings and understandings. Undoubtedly, when a consumer attends a farmers' market their expectations are not the expectations of somebody about to enter a department store (Spiller and Linehan 2006) or a shopping mall (Zukin 1998), where performances and interactions are rigid or more bounded than the practices and the process of shopping through more alternative means (Crewe and Gregson 1998). Shopping at a farmers' market often relies upon more considered or socialized awareness, as Sage (2003: 51) elaborates on the growth of alternative food consumption:

Many factors have contributed to this process, although changing consumer behaviour has clearly played a dominant role, as the embedded or inscribed meanings of alternative food products figure strongly in a more reflexive process of consumption and cultural identity.

Slippages at farmers' markets are constructed around issues of alterity, where windows of opportunity opened by such alternative means of food shopping present, and represent, moments where, for instance, stereotyping becomes alleviated because expectations are bounded with inter-relational practices or the benefits of localism, for example. Such performances create the theatre upon which the markets exist and these performances rely on the realities of offering something different or something that warrants, at least in the consumer's mind, a higher sense of reflection. Many of the consumers spoken to suggested they just wanted to support somebody local.

It could also be considered that there is a moral or social implication that underpins the market, in that small scale producers, which local producers generally are, provide better quality products (Campbell 2005). The morals involved in such situations usually focus on an avoidance of multinationals or the 'artisanal reaction', something Murdoch and Miele (2004: 156) suggest is, 'a turn towards products that are apparently delivered by simpler and more natural processes of production and preparation'. Shopping at farmers' markets generates social constructs that illuminate the potential to be gained and understood outside the realms of conventional shopping. For many consumers, what they actively seek is, in many ways, a sensation of 'back to basics' or a deliberate avoidance of the hegemony of supermarkets. As one Hexham consumer stated, 'I hate them, I really do, those supermarkets, they suck the life out of towns and cities'.¹⁴⁹ Similar sentiments are to the fore for many producers. One farmer¹⁵⁰ who once supplied a supermarket chain was vehemently opposed to ever dealing with them again. He continues:

... we had a lot of vegetables, one hundred acres, and rationalization of the supplier base, they just wanted big factories in Lincolnshire. They kicked us out, so I decided to carry on growing vegetables on a smaller scale, selling direct to the public basically, through the farmers' markets.

Within the confines of disgruntlement or an 'artisanal affect' lie the social constructs or subjectivity inherent to the durability of farmers' markets. Attitudes and understandings towards supermarkets, as much as those towards farmers' markets, would seem to guide, or certainly suggest, the realities or conceptions of what farmers' markets offer or what they do for the person in question. In-built in such considerations is the personalized perspective of those involved, but equally there is a deeper altruistic understanding, particularly on the part of consumers, where their purchase goes a lot further than one made in a supermarket. The 'little wo/man' or local producer is given business and the consumer gains what they often perceive to be a superior product or one with a story (see Chapter 5). However, for the farmer, the cold, hard facts of finance often dictate, in that for them a profit is the goal in attending a market (see Chapter 4). Each actor at the market has motivating forces behind their attendance and their interactions at the market. Undoubtedly, each story is subjective and holds an array of

¹⁴⁹ Interview: 6/7/05.

¹⁵⁰ Interview: 10/1/05.

influences, but what drives or motivates actors is all but impossible to qualify. That said, what could be estimated is that the actors participate in networks and circuits that rely on an economic, social and cultural mix that provides multifarious reasonings and understandings to those that are involved. From the small numbers of consumers spoken to, no two stories are the same when asked 'why do you attend farmers' markets', but what structures many of their thoughts are the issues and notions touched upon in previous chapters. The chapter now briefly delves into the socialization that occurs at the market and questions whether consumers are sensitive to their actions, and links some of these thoughts to Offer (1997) and Lee's (2000; 2002) concepts of 'regard'.

When buying something there is always an investment, both economically and socially or culturally. A bought product is wrapped up with a degree of subjectivity and positioned within a network or circuit; buying a product that does not include these elements is extremely unusual (Castree 2004). As Offer (1997) suggests products and objects are often exchanged without the advantages of 'markets or price' and, as such, goods and services in these instances are exchanged as gifts, where regard is experienced and valued through friendship, respect, loyalty or attention. As Offer (1997: 452) continues,

What is the relation between 'gift' and 'regard'? Regard is an attitude of approbation. It needs to be *communicated*. The gift embodies that communication and carries the signal. Trade in regard is vital: self-regard is difficult to sustain without external confirmation. The gift can be dear or cheap, substantive or symbolic. It is not costless... Gift exchange has two elements: the gains from trade, and the satisfactions of regard.

(Emphasis in original)

Lee (1996; 2000; 2002) highlights the social connectivity that is often essential to alternative forms of economics and espouses the characteristics that allow such programmes as Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) to flourish - these are grounded in social embeddedness or compatibility. His argument centres on both the spatial and social relations that are intrinsic to economics, particularly non-capitalist economics, and the inescapable input of the social in the economic. As Lee (2000: 142) suggests, the durability of something like a farmers' market goes

beyond the economic and materializes from the, 'constant tension between the possibilities of contingency and the constraints of coherence', and this is deliberated by the influence of social relations. Economic relations do not rest on singular entities but rather are the result of constant processes of consumption and production. To suggest that economics revolves around monetary exchange or value misses the vitality of the social.

The relationships between the economic, social and indeed the cultural tend to focus on the polyvocality that is in evidence in the everyday lives of those who attend farmers' markets - and during the processes of consuming in general. In buying or selling what is enacted is a host of realisations and contingencies that play a vital role in the economics of the markets, but as Lee (2000) suggests, in a more alternative context enjoying non-economic relationships may be economised - as a process of 'regard'. Here, the socially constructed elements within the relationship are powerfully situated when farmers' market relationships are made, broken or sustained. The circuits and networks of farmers' markets are constantly reproducing and their continuation can depend on something as innocuous as the type of conversation a producer and consumer participate in or for example, the degree to which a consumer engages with notions of localism. In essence, regard at farmers' markets is to an extent tied to a moral consideration, in that consuming is often tied into identity creation or the symbolic meaning attached to products (see Jackson and Holbrook 1995). As Murdoch and Miele (2004: 158) contend, 'there is something more to food, something connected to experience, cultural belonging and the way foods are ordered within our cultural worlds'. Thus, the morals of buying something local at a farmers' market far outweigh the purely economic considerations at hand; economics are not isolated in that they still have a role to play at farmers' markets, but for some consumers' monetary value is a secondary issue. As many consumers are keen to state, they are willing to pay 'a little bit more' (see Chapter 5). However, why are consumers prepared to do this? Granted we know that the food is considered to be of better quality at farmers' markets, and consumers like to help businesses viewed as non-multinational or chain store. However, are such considerations grounded in a moral system that is founded upon buying ethically or altruistically?

Ethical purchasing practices and a collective sense of social obligation have been vehicles in exploring some of the broader debates surrounding ethical consumption (see Becchetti and Rosati 2004; Carrigan et al. 2004; Goodman 2004b). Equally, issues of conscience have

furthered many considerations of ethics in terms of choices or personal and moral beliefs, as well as the role of ethics in lifestyle (see Crane and Matten 2003; Harrison et al. 2005; Hughes 2006). Perceptions, decision-making processes and intentions play a distinctive role in matters of care, awareness and responsibilities for those who consider themselves to be ethical consumers, and, as such, these concepts have also expanded understandings of ethical consumption (Goodwin 2003; Uusitalo and Oksanen 2004). Ethical consuming is often associated with thoughts of choosing carefully; 'doing the right thing' or ensuring that the knock-on effects of a purchase are to the benefit of all concerned. Those knock-ons can, and often do, include producers, workers and retailers in considering how their lives will be improved or sustained by the transaction in question. In essence, ethical reflections on consumption underwrite a responsibility on the part of the consumer that acknowledges a range of issues with regard to other actors in that consumption network; those issues can be anything from ensuring workers rights' to opposition to a multinational company. Ethics, overall, influence consuming habits for a section of UK consumers, where their ethical credentials are worn as a badge of honour.¹⁵¹ This is something with which many farmers' market consumers concur. As one consumer¹⁵² suggests, through 'Oxfam, Termaculture, organics, vegetarian stuff, vegan stuff, and I suppose campaigning groups, I was aware of the gulf between the producer and the consumers'. Ethical thoughts and actions structure many of the networks utilized by farmers' market consumers, and producers, and, as such, ethics are formulated in the light of a moral imperative where, in effect, a moral register helps to guide some of the actions of these actors. Ethics are a guide or reference point and, as Barnett *et al.* (2005: 28) explain, ethical interpretations are quite complex phenomena:

If 'ethical' is taken, in a loosely Foucauldian sense, to refer to the activity of constructing a life by negotiating practical choices about personal conduct, then the very basics of routine consumption—a concern for value for money, quality, and so on—can be seen to presuppose a set of specific learned ethical competencies. These competencies make up what one might call the habitual, practical dimensions of consumption.

¹⁵¹ For an example, see The Observer Magazine 15-4-07, its focus centring on issues of ethical consuming and celebrity sponsorship or attachment to certain 'causes'.

¹⁵² Attends Newcastle farmers' market, a 'self confessed' avid interest in all things 'alternative' (1/7/05).

What drives the ethical dimensions of choice for consumers is, as Barnett *et al.* suggest, mediated and within this are subjective choices, collective action, as well as a host of other influences. Learning to consume ethically is a practice that manifests from an active exposure to information and sources that espouse the virtues of such actions as well as the degenerative effect of choosing to ignore such issues; in essence, the argument is often framed as 'seduction and shame' (Barnett *et al.* 2005). That said, ethical consumption does have an echo of elitism in that in a UK context there is an amount of financial flexibility necessary to participate in such activities – a family on a budget may have more pressing needs (Howard and Willmott 2001).¹⁵³ Equally, working out what an ethical consumer is can be problematic, in that the presumption of an ethical consumer is that s/he is well educated and affluent (Weatherell, Tregear, and Allinson 2003) and this raises the question of information absorption by the consumer. Where do they get it from, what information do they get, and so on? Ascribing to the moral justification set forth by the media is open to manipulation, as too are some of the paraphernalia of, as the consumer above mentioned, 'vegan stuff and vegetarian stuff'. In these instances, there is a distinct motive behind much of the disseminated information. Nevertheless, what is often observed with farmers' market consumers is a selective ethical framework, where consumers tend to dip into and out of the ethical or moral framework. For instance, organic food for many consumers is tied with ethical consideration and for one consumer¹⁵⁴ who prefers to buy organic whenever she can, even within this remit her choice is selective: 'I don't buy as much organic vegetables as I do organic meat, because the price of organic vegetables is quite prohibitive'.

When buying an ethical, or in this instance organic product, there are moments of choosing the 'right thing' as well as moments of 'should I be doing this: it's expensive'. In essence, in buying ethically, do consumers buy the symbolic messages associated with farmers' markets and their products, and if so, do they really comprehend what it is they are in fact buying? As Crang (1996: 52) asks in relation to consumer knowledge:

[I]n terms of quantity (how much do consumers know about the commodities that they are involved with?); in terms of quality (what kinds of knowledges do consumers have?); in terms of source (where are these knowledges produced?); and in terms of economic

¹⁵³ These needs are also ethical choices, particularly in 'relationships between food expenditure and dietary adequacy, growth in children and measures of deprivation' (see Nelson *et al.* 2002:569).

¹⁵⁴ Regularly attends Hexham farmers' market, buys for two (14/7/05).

and cultural effects [in particular the economic and cultural surpluses extracted through them].

Knowing how information or knowledge is produced is apt to what is being considered here for, in the dash to display one's ethical credentials, sacrifices are possibly made or a blind eye turned. However, do these things really matter? Satisfying choice, ethical concerns and the symbolic images attached to them awakens comprehensions of 'you are what you consume' (Goss 1999). As such, for farmers' markets consumers, tied to attending the markets are displays of being an ethically aware consumer or somebody who is 'right-on' - to echo Murdoch and Miele (2004). However, consuming a representation, albeit one framed as a commodity, enacts a similar process to that of conventional shopping and the activities many farmers' markets strive to fight. Farmers' market commodities¹⁵⁵ flow along network and circuits that are comparable to other forms of retail and the literature or hype that surrounds them is equally comparable. The only notable difference is possibly scale,¹⁵⁶ in that the markets centre on representations and practices that are local rather than global (Opara and Mazaud 2001; Jackson 2004). Of course, scale is possibly exactly the point; it attracts farmers' market consumers in the first place. Nevertheless, the competence of consumers in knowing what they are buying, where it has come from, or how it has been made is often negligible; for many of those spoken to, such practicalities are secondary and they freely admit that they know nothing about the production side of things. Rather, as one Hexham consumer suggests, 'I don't tend to ask so much about the processes it goes through, I'm more interested in what the product is, that is inside it'.¹⁵⁷

In focusing on the commodity and not its production, in some ways consumers lose the ethical ingredient of that item. For a commodity to be truly ethical, its production must also be a consideration and to presume the commodity encompasses this in some ways misses the point

¹⁵⁵ The word commodity is used here as opposed to product to draw attention to the meanings and association that are attached to farmers' markets. These are the symbolic meanings that for many consumers make the farmers' market special and are the meanings that are often presented at such events as dinner parties, where the meal is presented as 'this meat is from the farmers' market'. As such, these representations reinforce notions of the 'green consumer' or somebody with ethical credentials (also see Chapters 2 & 6).

¹⁵⁶ Scale is a concept or assumption open to many challenges, particularly with regard to the notion of space and the organizational principle or hierarchy that scale is presumed to afford. Challenges such as those by Smith (2000a: 726) highlight, particularly in terms of hierarchy, how scale is relatively arbitrary or prone to be 'jumping scales' - that is, 'political claims and power established at one geographical scale can be expanded to another'. In essence scale is contestable and easily complicated and in many ways maintaining scales and hierarchical scales produces definitions, terms, constructs and 'flat ontologies' that often remove issues of agency from, for instance, global/local issues (see Marston et al. 2005).

¹⁵⁷ Regularly attends Hexham farmers' market, buys for four (13/7/05).

(Bennett 2001). Inevitably, the knowledges of farmers' market consumers are engaged with presumptions, as are consumer knowledges in general. Ordinarily, the responsibility of ensuring food quality falls to governmental agencies and, as such, consumers are happy to delegate the role of assurance to others. As a Newcastle consumer comments, 'I am assuming that it is because we have become a litigation society that people, if something was slightly wrong they would prosecute, so people no longer do this'.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, as de Certeau (1998) elaborates, where once body language, sales talk or intuition dictated a sale, now those assurances have been removed and in doing so appreciations have in some ways suffered, or changed. Tied into such consideration are issues of nostalgia and indeed, modernity, when prior to, for example, clinical packaging food knowledges were compatible with a different set of criteria, such as traditional practices or practices emphasising kinship (see Haukanes and Pine 2004; Holtzman 2006).

Within such considerations, there is an emphasis on what can be read on the label, not on the more semiotic clues of interaction or language, and in some ways, a farmers' market is valued because of its more traditional styles, means of production, means of selection and tastes. As Miele (2006: 349) suggests 'the process of aestheticization of everyday life where the knowledge about traditional cuisines and typical products is perceived and practiced by its members as a form of art'. Within this, modernity renders some of the means of food production of old as elevated in contemporary terms - or as an art form. The knowledges that were once common are considered in this light as something more or certainly different and, as such, food knowledges are reawakened in the context of the farmers' market. Ostensibly, knowledge of food production allows admiration and understanding, for example of ethical concerns. Relying upon disseminated knowledges rather than practical knowledges cultivates notions of distance, but it also in some ways engages and broadens notions of connection and the networks that surround something like a farmers' market product or commodity. Exposure to farmers' market meat, for example, has the potential to awaken newfound knowledges for consumers and producers alike, especially if the markets are embraced from the standpoint of a learning curve where alterity cultivates curiosity, and ultimately the attainment of new food knowledge or food production knowledge.

¹⁵⁸ Regularly attends Newcastle farmers' market, grown family, buys for two (29/7/05).

Power relations and simple economics

I suppose what we have learnt from dealing with the public is what they actually expect to see the visual, you know, what it sort of looks like ... So we have been able to adjust our quality to what we think the consumer expects, purely because we have had contact with people who actually buy the individual product... .

(Vegetable producer)¹⁵⁹

Farmers' market consumers hold varying levels of competences with regard to food, its means of production and the farming industry as a whole, and it is with this in mind that the thesis explores how issues of quality are understood by producers and consumers. As the producer above explains, how a consumer understands and views quality is a distinct indicator for him in what he grows and sells. Issues of quality at the markets can be challenging, for the ethos and billing that surround farmers' markets are often shrouded with suggestions that farmers' market produce is of a very high quality (see Chapters 2 & 5). Nevertheless, how is this qualified and understood¹⁶⁰ in the face of the distance, as suggested, that may exist between the knowledges of producers and consumers? Quality is undoubtedly a driving force at farmers' markets for this is what producers strive to perfect and what consumers expect to find. However, embedded in these expectations is, for many consumers, something of a constructed or conditioned perspective, as the relationships and networks at the markets encourage certain presumptions. Due to distancing, there is, in effect, a bridge in the relationships between producer and consumers at farmers' markets, one often underpinned by notions of power and trust. During moments of selection or purchase, if the consumer is uninformed, they are, to an extent, in the hands of the producer. Where actors lack knowledge, they may have little option but to accept the word (and power) of the dominant actor, and as a result, 'the employment of trust depends on the probability that other agents will behave in a way that is expected' (Zucker 1986: 21). Equally, this may be the purpose or reason for the consumers to visit the market, where they can extract knowledge from the producer – who essentially is viewed in the guise of the expert. Nevertheless, the relations between producer and consumer enact processes, for instance, of

¹⁵⁹ This producer attends 3 markets per month, but the majority of his business centres on supplying a supermarket chain (19/1/05).

¹⁶⁰ As talked about in Chapter 2, defining quality is problematic, particular in the context of food (see Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000).

evaluation, appreciation and/or knowledge acquisition. As Ilbery and Kneafsey (1999: 2212) stress within the power relations of such interaction, what is pressing is the draw of the relations:

... it is necessary to look at how associations between economic actors are constructed, and how control is exercised and value extracted. The focus on networks allows one to ask which actors come to exercise power within and through networks, and to understand how local actors are drawn into sets of relations and on what terms. Lowe *et al.* place power at the centre of their analysis, describing it as the 'glue' that binds networks together.

One of the draws of the markets can be loosely understood to be around quality, and within this, quality can mean issues of localism, organics or access to an 'expert'. However, the pressing point is the deliberation of power, particularly in instances when the actors may not stand on an equal footing.¹⁶¹ The chapter now briefly explores the power relations between market actors and how these relations play out.

Farmers' market actors encounter elements of trust, honesty and reliability in the relationships and networks that they foster. Embedded in these relationships are a number of power relations concerning how actors negotiate elements of trust and reliability. The power relations at markets *per se*¹⁶² can be played out through such things as age, gender, class or religion (Harriss-White 1999), and preferences or 'deals' may be solidified because of membership to one of these categories - equally, this membership may exclude a person from the deal. However, at farmers' markets, intertwined within these categories is the role of the expert; a person perceived as a specialist within the field of the product they are selling. As Gregson and Crewe (1997) have suggested in terms of the role of sellers at car boot sales (or as Hinrichs (2000) hints at in terms of farmers' markets), incorporated within the producers' identity are the scripts that allow a process of similitude or reinvention to take place. There is fluidity to the role of the producer in that what they present to consumers at the markets are often the representations that embody their lived experiences; that is, the jobs they perform, the process of production of their product

¹⁶¹ As opposed to Mark Granovetter's (1985) assumptions that both actors possess equal power and that trust is given and earned equally.

¹⁶² That is, all types of markets, not exclusively farmers' markets.

(which they have actively participated in) or something as innocuous as how they dress on a market day.¹⁶³ The markets are framed under the umbrella of alterity and within this they offer detachment, resistance or difference but inherently the translation of that difference is agency-led; it is a combination of components such as the expert that bridges the gap of the 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1967). Here, the markets to some extent are disconnected from normal consumption patterns, but also included.

Producers and consumers attempt to create an alternativeness that is simulated – or, at the very least, strained. The markets have the appearance of something different but many of their components – how people interact, the fundamentals of economics, supply chains, commodity circuits, and so on – are similar to conventional retail and, as such, the markets become a social construction or one driven by agency. The actors are what generate the fluidity of how the markets perform, move, fracture or conglomerate, as Hetherington suggests, 'a folded space in which order and disorder can be transformed into each other' (1998: 148). This is exemplified by the moral panics that often affect farmers' markets. As has been witnessed, if a television programme on a subject such as the conditions of battery chickens is aired a number of days before a market, then conversations, reactions and consumer choices are influenced as a result. In such instances producers can become a reference point, their expertise lends a sense of reality or 'telling it the way it really is' and, as such, they reconfigure the original message as deliberated by the television programme. The farmers' market producers in essence create a simulacrum of assurance transferred through knowledge, expertise or trust. A lamb producer¹⁶⁴ elaborates on his views of some of the more 'shocking' types of television reporting that have focused on the farm industry:

Listen, they watch this and they watch that, often it's a lot of crap. These television people have a lot to answer for. So yes, after something has been on the television, we have to let them know what we do and that there are no problems and things...

Reassuring farmers' market consumers on the quality of produce is dependent on the social relations at the markets, as a three-fold approach of expertise, knowledge and trust allows a

¹⁶³ See Chapter 6.

¹⁶⁴ Interview: 11/1/05.

bridge over the gap of distance or possible distrust to be created.¹⁶⁵ Without social relations, there is a sense that the fluidity would be lost (Lyon 2000). Mobilizing the social relations at farmers' markets in effect draws attention to the complex arrangements of the markets where agency and place fold through the material of the things in those arrangements (Hetherington 1997). While something like farmers' market lamb is subject to interpretations and deliberations, when the person who reared or produced it defends it, it is moulded through a sense of difference that has been imprinted on the product through representation. The product is framed within the social relations that surround it and, as a result, a farmers' market product only becomes a farmers' market product because of its relations, networks and connections.

Farmers' markets are the hubs during these moments of relations, networks and connections, for it is through them that much of the agency and power travels. By investing meaning and understanding into the markets, they become emboldened through, for example, moments of alterity. These are, in all probability, the moments that attract people to farmers' markets - or alternatively deter them. Nevertheless, of significance are the moments of localized pride or provenance, where undoubtedly there is a forceful appreciation of things because of the geographical viscosity of that product. Appreciations of localism run deep, as can be observed when consumers and producer alike speak of their local region, and it is this sense of pride in their region and what it can offer that occasionally inspires admiration or approval for the north east. Inherent within such a positive reception to the local is a fundamental trust of local flavours and textures and even in today's globalized food markets,¹⁶⁶ where many 'international' products are available in the north east, what remains is a strong devotion to a sense of the local. Of course, there is a robust argument to suggest notions of localism are tied to environmental concerns, human rights concerns or the lack of taste that often affects food that has travelled

¹⁶⁵ There have been some media reports on the dubious nature of the adherence of some markets to the rules of farmers' markets. Most recently, *The Times* (8-4-07) 'Revealed: How Farmers' Markets sell 'supermarket' foods' – and as a result an element of distrust has appeared in relation to where produce originates from and how it is being produced (see Donaldson 2006; Lowe and Ward 2007). Those interviewed for this thesis did not view the markets with any degree of suspicion and for them degrees of trust and distrust revolved around ensuring that the quality of products were consistent. Issues of dubious importation or non-local produce (as newspaper reports have focused on) were seen as insignificant, as one consumer stressed: 'No, I couldn't care less about that. For example there is a producer in Keswick, Keswick market and I think they are a local farming family, but they are Italian. I don't know what they do, they get olives and then do things with them, you know, add herbs and all, so there was a little hint of that, but if you are buying cheese, you buy olives or you know or whatever, it just adds interest. I mean, French markets have produce that is brought in as well as local produce as well as handicrafts and all the rest of it'.

¹⁶⁶ What is alluded to is the vast array of selections of food from all around the world now available at a local supermarket (see Cook and Crang 1996).

long distances, but while not wishing to discount such an argument,¹⁶⁷ there is something more happening here.

As explored previously, elements of trust are hard to build and maintain over distance and effectively this has connotations at the market where, for many consumers, there are concerns about the importation of food. Many consumers give the example of 'why import beans from Kenya, when they grow in the UK', and as a result elements of trust are easier to generate and maintain when food and its networks incorporate the local. However, issues of food origins are, for farmers' market consumers and producers, engaged with a sense of localized pride, where for many they see their region as having, 'the best cheese', 'best pies', 'best meat' or whatever you care to ask about.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, there is also an underlying sense of community involvement. The following conversations give an idea of just some localized thoughts:

... yes, it's very important, it's very important. ... although I do it sub-consciously, if there were somebody at the farmers' market who was from North Yorkshire or there was somebody from Northumberland and they were selling the same thing, I would definitely buy from somebody from Northumberland.¹⁶⁹

I mean it is important that it is British, because we live in Britain, right? So it's important that it is British, but it isn't important to the extent that it all has to come from Northumbria... 'cause I mean it wouldn't matter as long as we were supporting the people wherever they were at, do you understand what I mean? So if we went to Cumberland it would be important that it was from that area, because we would be there to support those people, if it's Northumbria, yes? If it's Yorkshire, yes, do you see what I mean?¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Undoubtedly ethical food consumption has an effect on producers and consumers at the market, as has been discussed (see Barnett et al 2005, Lyon 2006).

¹⁶⁸ Selective food choices can often indicate or be a result of political, economic or social experience (see Caldwell 2002), and as such, issues such as food nationalism or regionalism elevate consumption practices in how the evaluation of certain foods' enhance or consolidate, for instance, identity and/or personal connections. As Rosenberger (2007:340) suggests, 'because food is performed daily, it remains within people's control to bestow meaning on it, even though it is highly constrained by the political and economic forces of the nation. Food is an important point of articulation between individual, social and political levels. In eating food, bodies are engaged in an immediate, sensual, emotional experience', which can often reveal the meaningful relations between food and individual.

¹⁶⁹ Regularly attends Hexham farmers' market, buys for two (8/7/05).

¹⁷⁰ Regularly attend Hexham, Durham and Newcastle farmers' market, buy for two (1/7/05).

Well, I wouldn't necessarily know where it's reared geographically, just more, more the way that it has been produced, I think. Thinking about meat for an example, it would satisfy me more to know that the meat had come from the local area not just because of the fact that it is from the local area, but I think that contributes to a more healthy meat you know, sort of the welfare really. Making the assertion that something that has been well raised and well husbanded is going to produce a good product really. If that means it's had a short trip to the abattoir or it hasn't been driven back and forth or up and down the country for weeks on end, that is why I would buy something that is locally produced.¹⁷¹

... well, I prefer food that we get, whenever we can we get British, and that includes fruit, you know. Whatever food we can get we, get British.¹⁷²

Supporting the local community and economy heavily influences buying local for these consumers, but tied into these comments are issues of trust and, essentially, comfort or pride. For many farmers' market consumers in the north east there is a lack of adventurousness on their part in what they choose to eat¹⁷³ - as one consumer put it 'I don't experiment, I know what I like' - and as a result there is a distinctive pride or comfort in eating local food. The food is in a sense 'tried and tested'. Generally this type of food is traditional style fare, or 'meat and two veg'. Limiting the scope of food choice may render comparisons with non-local food as void, but equally standards and tastes maybe heightened due to the intensification of such a limited choice. For example, because a person only eats lamb, it might be assumed that they should be familiar with the best lamb in the region. Additionally, elements of trust also surface in the above conversations, particularly evident in the third quotation, where animal husbandry is tied in with a good product. Animal welfare, for many consumers, is a deep concern, and buying from local producers offers some assurance that, as the consumer suggests, the animals have not travelled long distances and that the whole process of production is dealt with humanely. Of course, there are no guarantees, but, what this consumer suggests is that by dealing with the

¹⁷¹ Regularly attend Durham farmers' market, buys for one (14/7/05).

¹⁷² Attends the Durham farmers' market irregularly, buys for two (21/3/05).

¹⁷³ This of course is a presumption, but one based on the fact that over 50% of those interviewed suggested they would prefer 'British style' food to any other category of food. All interviewees were asked would they consider themselves adventurous when it came to food and again over 50% said no.

producer directly one can gauge whether the animals are well cared for, and if it is feasible to assume so (also see Chapter 5). In utilizing this type of connection, the effect of localism is to suggest a product that is of good quality and one steeped in a localised knowledge that the consumer can access and appreciate for whatever reason they hold dear. Elements of localism and trust create vibrancy at the markets that allow a sustainable force to promote the markets in the realms of quality and, more importantly, the durability and sustainability of the north east (or the region in question, as witnessed at farmers' markets outside the north east).

Underpinning most of the issues mentioned so far are the moments of social relations and social networks that lubricate the here and now of the markets, and it is these moments that sustain the markets through their ever evolving qualities and processes of consumption (Shove 2003). As suggested, learning to consume at farmers' markets is in many ways an ambivalent mix of the normal and the alternative - the practices of buying and selling at the markets rely on the fundamentals of economic and commodity chains, but also provide subtle difference to many everyday consuming practices (Holloway et al. 2007). In conclusion this section highlights just some of the subtleties observed at farmers' markets and places them within the social and economic parameters that often occupy 'the work of consumption' (Goss 2006). At the market, there are many forms of partnerships, cooperatives and conglomerations that are not performed in the conventional sense. Instead, these are informal arrangements, that are often not understood or are not viewed in terms of economic or even social relations. For the producers and consumers that participate in such arrangements they become so embedded as to rarely question or ask how they perform their roles at the markets. In the classic language of economic and social analysis, this is defined as social embeddedness, or as Polanyi (1944) would suggest, the social bonds rather than monetary goals which underlie the values and norms that predict price. Much has been written in contention to Polanyi's seminal paper on social embeddedness;¹⁷⁴ however, in extracting a sense of the social in economic systems this thesis concentrates on the 'shared collective understandings shaping economic strategies and goals' (Hess 2004: 171). The collectives considered are between producers as well as between producers and consumers. This is not to dismiss the economic impacts and aspects that prevail at markets, where, for instance, the price of produce is a determinate for some people. However, the thesis also moves beyond this and explores three examples of the more non-economic collectives witnessed that influence or cajole producers and consumer at the markets.

¹⁷⁴ For examples, see Granovetter 1985, Sayer 2000 or Hess 2004.

To begin, it is worth examining one type of partnership between two producers at the Hexham farmers' market. Here a producer of homemade ready-meals discovered her sales increased dramatically when she highlighted the source of the chicken she used. Displaying her menu of the day on a chalkboard at her stall the producer normally wrote a simple list of the meals for sale. However, she expanded her descriptions of the meals with details of the ingredients used, such as the supplier of the chicken used, the meals sold in record time. 'Why hadn't I thought of it before I kept asking myself, it was so obvious', she told me during an informal conversation. The producer had for a long time used the produce from a fellow farmers' market producer and one day, more out of accident than design, included the producer's name. Highlighting the short connections between producers at the markets suggests that a degree of compatibility exists between producers, and it may elicit, for consumers, a sense of trust and connection. As the producer stated, if the consumer has previously purchased the chicken separately, and enjoyed it, the experience is built upon, and that positive experience transfers to the ready-meal. Again, echoing Law (1986) and Barnett *et al.* (2005), trust is hard to manufacture over distance, and this example demonstrates a conglomeration where both the product and its ingredient are traceable and present at the market. The relationship between traceability and presence is ultimately appealing for many consumers, in that as many consumers suggest, 'I know what I am buying'. In a sense, the knowledge of the producer is what consumers invest in when they buy at the market. As Teil and Hennin (2004: 25) suggest in relation to taste, this knowledge allows relations to develop:

Different people in different situations bring into play a collective knowledge, of which taste is a result. In other words, taste is a way of building relationships, with things and with people; it is not simply a property of goods, nor is it a competence of people.

While taste can build one relationship, traceability or trust equally binds other relations, and in this way acts such as buying a homemade ready-meal are bound with knowledges (of food sources, taste, etc) and elements of trust. Furthermore, another example of this style of relations at the markets revolves around bartering. Bartering or the exchange of goods often follows the end of a market and neighbourly appreciations, rather than economic ones, bind the processes of exchange in these instances. Occasionally, producers swap products when the markets have

finished. Obviously, the produce in question is what has been left over, but this is not to say this produce has lost value – some of the produce still has the potential to be sold at up coming markets or in farm shops, or indeed used in ready-meals. However, during the bartering, there is a bonding of social actors through a prism of altruism or good will. Swapping products awakens a sense of community and cohesion as social relations between producers are often strengthened through expressions of unity. It serves to suggest that producers value each other's produce and ultimately enjoy using or eating that produce,¹⁷⁵ thus giving an endorsement to the producer and their produce. This irrevocably leads to open endorsements at the markets, when for example one producer recommends another's sausages, or recalls to a potential consumer, 'I had some of them for my tea last night and they were wonderful'. Recommendations are very appealing to consumers and, as witnessed, consumers regularly ask producers for suggestions as to where they may get an ingredient or food that would complement what they have just bought.

Finally, one more network that seems to have a strong bond at the markets, particularly in the eyes of the consumers, is the family business. Family businesses create certain positive impressions and often provide a link or topic of conversation with consumers, for example, conversations regarding how children are enjoying school. For many consumers there is a deep-seated trust toward family business. One pork producer regularly brings her 12 and 8-year-old sons along and the sons on occasion set up a small stall beside the parent selling identical produce - without fail, the sons sell out. The producer and one of her sons explain:¹⁷⁶

(Producer): Some [consumers] like the children to get involved, don't they; some say you know, 'Come on are you going to serve me then?'.

(Son): Everyone says that, like, how good a salesman I am.

(Producer): I think they enjoy dealing with somebody that is young, that is keen to, you know, and looks attentive and is pleasant to them, and you know what I mean, and I

¹⁷⁵ As witnessed during one interview, the producer had just returned from a market and cooked the family meal during the interview. The meal consisted entirely of produce she had received in exchange for her end-of-day surpluses. The majority of the produce came from a producer new to the farmers' market and much of the family conversation revolved around evaluating the produce and discussing the 'new' producer. Of interest, was that it almost appeared that the new producer was undergoing an initiation process (26/1/05).

¹⁷⁶ Interview: 26/1/05.

think that, but then again that's the experience they like at the farmers' market isn't it, you know?

For many family members, selling at the market is something to be avoided, as a number of older teenage children of producers attested – 'sitting behind a stall on a cold day is no fun'.¹⁷⁷ Undoubtedly working at the markets is as much a financial decision as a marketing one for many producers: employing family members to work at the markets is generally cheaper than employing staff. However, even with teenage protestations, there is evidence at most markets of family members at stalls and once again, judging from the reaction that these actors get at the markets they create connectivity and vibrancy that consumers seem to welcome and embrace. Fully understanding just how consumers appreciate such connection is difficult to decipher, but the actions and experiences of consumers (and producers' families) would suggest that participating at the markets as a family business enlivens social relations. How these relations play out is dependent on the actors and their interaction, but in general terms, the relations are solidified by and through some of the examples suggested. Subtle though they may be in comparison to more conventional retailing, these small components keep the markets durable and it is appreciations such as these that colour many of the consumers' choices at the markets.

Conclusion

This chapter has given some flavour of the durable moments of farmers' markets, where the relatively banal practices of the markets serve to strengthen bonds, links and associations between farmers' market actants. The fluidity and mobility of these links allows the markets to remain in the *here and now* and distinctively structure the disconnections, invisible connections and reconnection in evidence. Much like any process of consumption, the markets embrace stories and practices that build-up to the point of sale or purchase, and it is these stories that fundamentally shape the outcomes during moments of transaction. In exposing the alterity of the markets, and the juxtapositions that often arise, the chapter has problematized some of the

¹⁷⁷ Informal conversation before interview (18/1/05).

invisible connections and understandings that are hidden or camouflaged at the markets. As Willis (1991: 51) suggests:

In a society defined by consumption, where the commodity is perceived as separate from its site, moment, and mode of production, commodities seem to offer themselves up spontaneously to the consumer.

It is precisely this that has been countered in highlighting some of the possibilities at the market in discovering the separation or abstract as well as the connections that create durable moments. Trying to uncover what sustains a market is open to many interpretations and this chapter has drawn on examples witnessed at farmers' markets in suggesting how social and economic relations, as well as alterity, lubricate the wheels of motion for farmers' markets. It is these durable moments when reviewed from a distance or as a fact - much like the supermarket trolley – that encourage us to appreciate how these moments make the farmers' markets happen, and equally their role in life in general (Latour 1991).

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Consumption is a process intricately enmeshed in the situated practices and social relations of modern everyday life, in the commonplace spatialities of individual and collective existence.

(Pred 1996: 12)

The aim throughout the thesis has been to explore farmers' markets from a new perspective, and to involve social relations and social practices in how we understand moments of consumption. The first step was to suggest an ethnographic and ethnomethodological framework, which is different to that used in much of the literature that has previously looked at the markets. In this light, an ethnographic and ethnomethodological, as well as multi-sited, approach helps to explore issues such as agency, symbols, materiality, affect, performance, beliefs, values and durability. Approaching farmers' markets in this way introduces the notion that there are a host of influences and experiences that solidify our understandings of a farmers' market. Indeed, as argued, farmers' markets have the potential to be understood from the perspective of an assemblage, where many of its components mingle, cajole and mix in what can be described as

the 'messiness' of the markets. However, as suggested, it is impossible to document all of these. This thesis has argued that the themes of *food matters*, *experiencing the market* and *interrelations* add to the understanding of farmers' markets and this chapter summarises these themes and suggests that these are distinctive components of a farmers' market. Following this, my concluding comments concern the contribution this thesis makes to food studies, geographies of consumption and to wider academic debates.

Food Matters

Food is the commodity around which most farmers' market activities are based. There are non-food commodities at such markets, but for the most part in the north east of England, what people buy at farmers' markets is food. As suggested in Chapter 5, food is distinctive because it influences and affects daily life and, equally, it presents a range of appreciations or applications (Probyn 1999). There are variations in how people consider food or enjoy it, or even dislike it (see Fairburn and Harrison 2003); nevertheless what is suggested here is that food matters, and it matters because of the role it plays. As this thesis has explored, the computations that revolve around food can, and often do, create contexts in which things happen – in this case a farmers' market. While this thesis has not explored the finer detail of what makes a farmers' market product, it has highlighted the meanings, practices and relations that food helps to awaken. Chapter 4 stated that 'food [h]as currency'. This is important because often value is not constructed around an innate object but rather around the connections and associations that the object represents or personifies (Makatouni 2002). An ethnographic approach in exploring food was adopted, precisely because food is subjective – as argued in Chapter 5, no two people taste in the same way. Ethnographic, as well as ethnomethodological, approaches towards food and, indeed, farmers' markets generate appreciations and understandings of foods subjectivity (see Chapter 3), and this thesis aims to gain a 'lifeworld' perspective (see Marcus 1995): a perspective that realizes the humdrum of everyday life and what people are thinking or acting when they buy and sell food.

This thesis has attempted in a rather holistic manner to try to combine much of what 'goes on' around food, around farmers' markets and around the people at farmers' markets and for this reason, it examined the markets in terms of assemblage. Assemblages are in many ways hard to

succinctly pin-down, for in any given situation, particularly a socially led one, they involve many degrees of influences, suggestions or confusions. As Bennett (2005) suggests, an assemblage is a 'living throbbing' thing. As she goes on to explore in terms of the North American black-out of 2003, there are components within any assemblage that single issues such as agency can be inadequate in exposing. Often there is a presumptive force in exploring assemblages, in that, there is a familiarity in thinking about how 'things' operate. Only in adverse situations – such as a power blackout – do some of these realization come into focus. As suggested, appreciations of farmers' markets and their 'messiness' emerge. From the outset, this thesis has striven to include the unconscious, invisible and less widely discussed notions of personal interaction and practice revolving around food at the markets. Messiness is the gap between the excitement and the mundanity of buying and selling farmers' market food. Mindful of framing everything at the markets or 'society as a whole' (see De Landa 2006), the thesis has been selective in exposing just some of the endless spatial and material stories that abound (see Chapter 4).

Experiencing the market

Actors or agents are central to farmers' markets, and within this, there are a host of experiences shared. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, experiences of the markets in terms of ethnographic moments or personal perspectives have not always been to the fore when understanding farmers' markets and, as such, it has been the intention to advance knowledges in relation to how the markets 'play out'. One of the main themes of this thesis has been the physicality of the markets, in particular the practices, routines and relations that are enacted through how actors conduct themselves, interact, employ certain senses or negotiate the sociabilities and materialities of the markets. While *food matters* are important so too are the subjective knowledges that engage farmers' markets. The intensities of feeling toward, for example, local food that awaken modalities and meanings are not always easily traceable. However, tracing consumer and producer subtleties and nuances in relation to how they buy and sell offers access to personalized stories and the social relation and practices of, for example, entanglements or the layering of understandings, routines or practices at the markets (see Chapter 5). The ontological framework of such a process is expansive, in that experience has many determining factors. However, the glue that binds these infrastructures, routines, practices and experiences is formed by the materialities of farmers' markets. The materials embed and guide much of the behaviours at the

markets and, as such, much of the reasoning and understanding associated with them. As explored in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, materiality helps to frame some of the affective registers or realities that occur at the markets. Without the concreteness of the material in question, its evaluation in terms of, for example a quality product, would be abstracted. The affective component has to be layered onto the material object, much like concepts such as 'adding-value' to agricultural products by selling through a farmers' market (Curry 2002; Thrift 2004a). There is a background to the behaviours and the materials of the markets, for example the journey to the market for both producers and consumers, as well as for the food on sale. The layering process of applying meaning, such as high quality or localness and its understanding in the context of farmers' market food can take the form of affective or performative registers because the food is often understood not for what it is, but for how it is sold or the context in which it is sold (see Chapters 5 & 6).

Throughout, this thesis has considered the moment when producer and consumer meet, or the moment of interaction, because it is in many ways the pinnacle of the argument. Here is the collision or the assemblage where almost everything comes together. Farmers' markets are heterotopic spaces where marginal forces impose ideals that fundamentally flavour the actions and experiences at the markets (see Chapter 6). Within these, social dynamics enliven sensory, affective, corporeal or performative appreciations. However, daily life and the durability of these interactions and actions generate normalization. As the process and practices become routinized, they become mundane or banal and within these moments, some of the experiences of the markets can be read. For example, farmers' markets are often performed or understood in terms of alterity or something different, yet this alterity can often be usurped by the forces against which the alterity is gauged, for example, the mainstreaming of alternative food systems (see Jackson *et al.* 2006a). Nevertheless, even when removed or disembedded from normality, once routinized this too becomes normal and, as such, it is the often unconscious moments of proficiency that become important in exploring issues of identity, interaction or performance (see Chapter 6). As Deleuze (1994) might suggest, experience is continual and from these experiences we evolve or mature; in essence there is an assemblage to experience that includes the antecedents as well as the more immediate actions of any interaction.

Interrelations

The producer/consumer nexus is unique but not exclusive to farmers' markets. When a producer and consumer meet face-to-face, there are a number of concepts or issues enacted, none more so than the interrelations that underpin the event. As suggested in Chapter 7, there are connections, networks, links, influences and associations that strengthen the bonds between the actors and it is the fluidity and mobility of these bonds that can structure how the markets are played out. Once again, farmers' markets appear as assemblages: they relate elements, such as the relationships, lived experiences, practices and associations that underscore farmers' markets. In any moment of consumption, there are connections and at farmers' markets, these connections become somewhat transparent. For example, processes of production can be discussed directly with the producer and may become clearer than, for example, at a supermarket (see Cook 2004). Some interrelations do not appear immediately obvious to a consumer and, as a result, production processes can become invisible (Willis 1991), whereas, when faced with a producer or a producer's performance at a farmers' market (see Chapter 6), connections and interrelations may come to the fore in how products are appreciated and understood.

The key here is how activities that normally go unnoticed are played out at farmers' markets. Within this context, the role of the consumer and issues of reflexivity in the consumer's views of the markets and their produce may influence how the relations are framed and enacted (Moore 2006). Moments of insignificance and as Deleuze (1994) might suggest, moments of immanence are of interest. It is precisely these moments, because of their practised and learned patterns, that offer possibilities. If a person is doing something on a regular basis there is a fair assumption to be made that the processes and practices involved are used because they are successful or the preferred method (see Chapter 6). Liable as this statement is to an element of presumption, understanding personal preferences such as taste is difficult (often the actors themselves cannot explain how they understand taste); despite this, by examining the routinized behaviours and involuntary actions of actors at farmers' markets a degree of understanding is achievable. For many of those interviewed, a core component of the markets is the closeness or connections that the markets generate. Again, this is a concept that takes many shapes and forms; for example, how 'Daisy is brought to market' (see Chapter 7). Here, pictures of Daisy are displayed as her

meat is being sold and the 'closeness' is how, in this case, a visual tool makes the connection between beast and consumer more tangible. The social intricacies and subtleties that engage ways of negotiating, commodity chains or modes of practice at farmers' markets bring something new to the understanding of the processes of consumption. Farmers' markets are somewhat different in that the routines and practices that underlie buying and selling rely on a more embedded or face-to-face framework. There is a more personal engagement in the relations of producers and consumers, in the sense that performances, senses, associations and durable moments count. They are valued as being central to the markets and, in particular, they are why a producer may decide to sell there or why a consumer may decide to buy there. These values, of course, are not the only influence, as making a profit, for example, is equally important (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, at the moment of transaction at a farmers' market, there are things that each actor brings. It is by looking at some of these that a richer understanding of the social and economic relations at the market may be appreciated.

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The focus of this thesis has been farmers' markets and how the markets are played out; much of what has been written here owes a great deal to the current debates that surround food studies and geographies of consumption, as well as many wider academic debates. It has been the intention of this thesis to explore these debates and consider them in terms of how the thesis has approached farmers' markets. The debates, as mentioned, have informed my arguments, challenged my arguments and, above all, focused them. However, the thesis concludes by discussing how it has contributed to these debates; in particular, food studies, geographies of consumption, and policy and practice.

Issues and debates concerning food have received a consistent degree of attention over the last number of years, and much of this work has possibly been in direct response to many of the wider public debates that have surrounded issues such as Foot and Mouth, BSE or ethical foods. Nevertheless, what food, and indeed food studies, has served to highlight is the growing interest and research into an issue that escapes very few. Food is essential to all and because of this necessity, it is a material that is readily acknowledged (in that everybody knows what they eat), but is often viewed in terms of mundanity or acceptance. For example, as has been suggested, do

supermarket consumers regularly consider how the food they are consuming arrived at the supermarket (see Cook 2004)? Much of the more recent food studies work has tended to concentrate on the networks involved in the supply and demand of food, and as previously stated, work on AFNs and SFSCs, as well as food studies more generally, has proved extremely informative in highlighting the growing interest and diversification of food supply chains and networks. Nevertheless, as argued there have been a number of neglected areas in the framing of this work and an aim of this thesis has been to expand on this.

The thesis has attempted to broaden the debate within food studies, specifically through a focus on affect and performance. The focus of these approaches rests in the field of geographies of consumption, discussed subsequently, and the nexus of the producer and consumer at farmers' markets. As suggested, buying food directly from a producer is relatively unusual in a UK context and as a result farmers' markets are seen as being different to, for example, supermarkets because of the directness of sales. Farmers' markets are viewed, understood and appreciated by those who participate at them as possessing 'something more' than conventional food shopping. The 'something more' or the 'something different' suggests how certain 'things' matter at the markets. The thesis has argued that often food studies literature relies on staid models or established understandings of how the process of buying and selling food operates, and the arguments as set out in this thesis rests with the notion that much of this work in from a rather 'agencyless' perspective (see Chapter 2). There have been attempts in the past to embrace such challenges and issues of social embeddedness, as well as disembeddedness, and notions of the 'cultural turn' have been applied in expanding how food studies have been approached, researched, and understood. However, it has been the intention of this thesis to explore such notions through, for example, the physicality of farmers' markets. It is the personal testimonies of those that actually take part in the markets that have informed this research and through the focuses of affect and performance, farmers' market actants have informed how we understand the something more or something different at the markets.

As argued, understanding or indeed capturing, the something more or different is difficult to do, as indeed are many agency-led events. Nevertheless, the perspective of those involved in the ethnographic and ethnomethodological research applied here allows for a reading of the markets and food studies that considers the 'more-than-representational' (see Lorimer 2005). The specific focus on affect and performance highlights the nuances and subtleties of buying and

selling food. There is much to consider when reviewing the act of buying and selling food, for example, the networks and supply chains involved; however, this thesis has focused on the moment of exchange. This moment is often automatic or unconscious, and as a result, can highlight elements such as preferences or dislikes that in effect contribute to much of the existing consumption literature. As Miller (1998) suggested, even when undertaken in the most mundane or tedious of circumstances, food shopping awakens emotive connotations; familial love can often play a role when people shop in supermarkets. Equally, certain types of environments, commodities and shopping activities are emotive and affect how people shop. Food shopping, particularly the more practised forms of it at farmers' markets, have been a focus of this thesis and, for instance, issues such as immateriality and affect help to ground some of the emotive contexts in which farmers' markets are situated. As argued, the intention of this thesis has been to create 'messiness' and when elements of agency are inherent to a debate there is always an amount of complication present. The formalities, actions, reactions, thoughts, understandings and reasonings of those buying and selling are often hard to predict. No two people look at or taste anything in exactly the same way. The approach taken by this thesis has expanded upon much of the existing work of food studies and has engaged with issues such as affect, immateriality and performance in attempting to contribute to food studies.

The geographies of consumption have been a central theme within this thesis, and one of the main contributions this thesis makes to the field of consumption is the notion of assemblages. The significance of this focus is the elucidation of the subtleties and nuances of how people understand and conduct interactions, and the new parameters, knowledges and meanings that come into the fray during moments of consumption at farmers' markets. As has been argued, there is messiness to the markets and it is through the exploration of this messiness that a detailed understanding of the assemblage of consumption begins to surface. The thesis considered the markets as focal because they offer something different in relation to consumption patterns or experiences in the UK. Shopping, as has been argued, initiates many affective, material, performative and ephemeral modalities. These allow a focus on the interactions and actions involved in buying food at the farmers' markets and the 'play' of this exchange. The enlivened performances of actors actualize the processes and routines that have been explored. Performances, objects and agents play central roles in the consumption patterns of the average farmers' market, and equally, the market's produce plays in a rather unique way with consumer emotions. For consumers, the markets invariably symbolize elements of

nostalgia, localism, healthy living and 'doing their bit' for the local economy in the emotive 'feel good' factor that can ensue from ethical-type consumption (Barnett et al. 2005; Campbell 2005). For producers, the markets engage with new forms of retail and knowledges, as well as the act of selling (and bartering - see Chapter 7) at farmers' markets and the colliding networks, associations, symbolic meanings and understandings often present within these spaces of consumption.

In introducing notions of assemblage at the markets, it was the intention to give equal focus to many of the dualisms, and ambiguous and ambivalent approaches, that have often framed debates concerning geographies of consumption in relation to food. As suggested, there is more to be seen and read at farmers' markets than dualisms (see Chapters 1 & 2). It is the complexities of social life, for instance, its interruptions, movements, changes and resistances, that have been the focus of this thesis and in incorporating many of these elements, this thesis has moved towards an inclusive approach in understanding many of the 'things' that go on during moments of consumption. Of course understanding, or even debating, all of these elements is extremely difficult to do, but the aim of this thesis has been to expose the potential of assemblages in enlivening debates on consumption and seeing these moments as important in unravelling what goes on at the markets, as well as other debates concerning the geographies of consumption. In essence, this thesis has included notions of affect, materiality, performance, emotions, ephemerality and physicality in widening consumption debates because issues such as these can add much. As has been argued throughout the thesis, these have been chosen to complicate existing debates (or add messiness). For example, economic approaches to consumption can often be linear and/or reliant on rational means of enquiry and logical findings. This is not to dismiss economics from the debate, for in the true sense of assemblage, economics are essential to the markets and are equally included in the assemblage. However, what the thesis has strived to demonstrate is some of the other elements of assemblages that are often neglected, unconscious or simply taken for granted.

In addition, the thesis has also contributed to the consumption literature, because its focus departs from existing modules of food analysis, which tend to concentrate on the layering of symbolism onto objects and the object then tends to disappear (see Chapter 2). It has engaged with the objects and the immaterialities of farmers' markets in an attempt to keep a focus on the

object, as well as the symbolism concerned with such an object. The premise of this thesis has rested with the moments when producers and consumers meet at the markets and the actual physicality of something like the emotive or affective notions tied up in such a construct. The thesis has given focus to those at the markets and, indeed, to the materials at the markets. Examples such as 'Daisy goes to market' have attempted to play with some of the hybridity that can take place between objects, symbolism and the disappearance of the object. Daisy in this example is an object, a symbol and a mix between both. The assemblage of material and agent allows focuses, such as materiality, affect, performance and ephemerality, to present concise and insightful additions to the geographic literature concerning issues of consumption. The thesis has argued that a more agency-led approach has the potential to expand geographical understandings of consumption and has included the notion of assemblage in embracing just some of the many and varied ways in which people buy and sell in the UK.

The complexity of how people buy and sell is what this thesis has addressed and, as Pred (1996: 12) suggests, 'our ethnographically based knowledge of the practices, meanings and cultural politics of shopping behaviour is limited and our theories are thereby impoverished'. Understanding how people shop and what they do when the shop has remained a focus of geographies of consumption and, in part, a focus of food studies. One of the main aims of this thesis has been an emphasis on ethnographically grounding some of the practices, meanings and understandings of those who participate at farmers' markets. As suggested in Chapter 5 the notion of practice and routine contributes to the argument. Once again, the notion of practice, like buying and selling, is complex, in that what this thesis has argued is for a more in-depth knowledge of the unconscious practices that abound at the markets, for example, the teloaffective structures that accompany any journey to the market. Within this journey there are many questions and answers that only the individual in question can answer, for example, whether to walk to the market, and of course, within this simple question there are a host of further questions and answers – 'how long will the walk take?', 'what is the weather like?', etc. Approaching such actions from the perspective of practice allows appreciations of how people do things and often why they do them.

The thesis has argued for an appreciation of farmers' markets as sites of rational shopping, where shopping follows a distinct and practiced course, something not always forthcoming in the

current literature focusing on farmers' markets. Within this work much has been made of the markets as being sites of something different or alternative – and in this respect there has much emphasis placed on the markets as sites of irrational or carefree shopping, where many of the behaviours rely on the more irrational perspectives of consumers (see Chapters 5 & 7). However, this thesis has expanded these debates to suggest that markets are very rational sites of shopping, and indeed, because of the success of the markets, their strategies and practices have become incorporated into mainstream or conventional food retailing. The notion of practice is integral to the everyday components of farmers' markets because they are simply the routines and actions that people regularly enact. Understanding the mechanics of a market can be grounded through how they play out over a sustained period of time as if the markets survive and people continue to buy and sell at them, then the processes and actions of these participants succeed. Nevertheless, because practices succeed in the north east of England is not to say they will be enacted in identical or similar ways throughout the UK or in other contexts.

This thesis chose the north east of England for a number of reasons (see Chapter 3) and many of the arguments and debates mentioned here enjoy unique perspectives precisely because they are situated in the north east. The three markets that are the focus of the thesis were picked because they focused on markets run by a city council, a market company and a market run by producers and enthusiasts. How markets are organised has a definitive influence, for example, how markets choose to adhere to FARMA regulations has an impact on the rules and regulations of the markets (see Chapter 4). Equally, the settings of the markets also plays a role and, once again, each market demonstrates some uniqueness in that one is a city market, one a small city market and one a market town or rural setting. The context of the North East serves to suggest how three markets in a specific area function, the policy and practice implication are firmly grounded in this area and as the example of how market rules are adhered to suggests certain subtleties make be unique to the area. Nevertheless, it was always the intention to position the north east within the wider debates that currently inform academic considerations, and as such many of the issues drawn on in this thesis contribute to wider debates. For example, issues of the producer/consumer nexus and the direct or face-to-face interactions at the markets are something that most, if not all, farmers' markets enjoy. Meeting the producer enacts physicalities, emotions, performances and networks that are applicable to wider debates, such as geographies of consumption or food studies. The emphasis here being an understanding of processes of shopping and how they are carried out and understood within the context of situations that are

slightly unusual or different (see Chapter 2). Equally, tracing focuses such as social relations and social practice has further implications, for example, ones that could be applied to varying forms of consumption. As stated, the thesis has endeavoured to explore what happens to a product, object or commodity and the actants involved along commodity chains or networks, as well as during the actual moment of consumption. As specified in Chapter 2, there is a gap in much of the wider literature concerning food studies and consumption studies, especially some of the more intricate moments of consumption. This thesis adds new appreciations to these areas and widens debates, such as understandings of food shopping and more specifically, an account of how farmers' markets 'play out'.

In concluding this thesis, some final thoughts must also be given to issues of policy. Issues of policy structure most UK farmers' markets and, documents such as the 'Curry Report' and the policy documents released by DEFRA, FARMA, the Soil Association and Agenda 21 have played a distinctive role in how the markets are appreciated and how they function in the UK. The Curry Report, issued in 2002, is probably the most influential policy document on the future of the UK farming industry. Within this document, there is a focus on the need to reconnect: reconnections between farming and the food chain, reconnections between the food chain and the countryside, and reconnections between consumers and their food. The Curry Report seeks ways and means of improving farming business developments and giving farmers more opportunities to diversify. The context of the report is to help an industry that has become 'dysfunctional' and 'detached' - what could also be added here is that the document was written in the shadow of Foot & Mouth which hung over the farming industry at the time. One term taken from the report that has been widely cited in this thesis is the notion of 'adding-value'. For many of the producers spoken to here, getting a 'true' value for their products and recovering from the Foot & Mouth crisis helped them to begin trading at farmers' markets. However, as argued, exploring how the producers learned to trade and experienced trading at the markets (now six years after the Curry Report and 11 years after the first UK farmers' markets) needs consideration. This thesis has explored issues of direct contact between producer and consumers, as well as the social relations and practice that occur at the markets and in doing so has considered issues of reconnection, emotive factors, physical factors and the durability of the markets. In essence, this thesis has built upon the policy implications detailed in the Curry Report and other reports like it. In terms of policy, this thesis serves to suggest how the initial policies related to farmers' markets have matured, and indeed how new insights can contribute to

further work in this direction. There is much to be learned from direct selling for both consumers and producers, as well as for policy makers, and knowledges of how and why people buy and sell can inform.

This thesis began by suggesting that farmers' markets are not new. They have been in the UK for the past few centuries; all that has changed are some of the contexts that surround them - or, indeed, the names the markets are given. Fundamental to farmers' markets is buying and selling, and the interactions between those who participate. There are many components to buying and selling and as Zukin (2003) suggests, farmers' markets engage real people in face-to-face interactions, build and create communities and public space. Farmers' markets include many distinctive factors and are incredibly complex and diverse phenomena in how they function, are organised, and are understood. It is due to this complexity that farmers' markets should always remain fertile in terms of their interest to, for example, food studies, geographies of consumption, and areas of practice and policy. This thesis contributes to these areas and its intention has been to extend the capabilities, focuses and attentions of these areas of academic debate.

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Appendices

Producer interviews

Beef producer (Interview date - 24/1/05)

Beef producer (28/1/05)

Bread producer and Hexham market organizer (25/1/05)

Buffalo producer (10/1/05)

Cakes and confectionary producer (14/1/05)

Cheese producer (17/1/05)

Confectionary and bread producer (26/1/05)

Dried and smoked fish producer (1/2/05)

Flour producer (4/1/05)

Flower and shrub producer (12/1/05)

Fruit and Vegetable producer (19/1/05)

Goat cheese and meat producer (11/1/05)

Lamb producer (11/1/05)

Lamb producer (18/1/05)

Mustards and pickles producer (12/1/05)

Organic meat, dairy and vegetable producer (17/1/05)

Organic vegetable producer (27/1/05)

Pancake and confectionary producer (25/1/05)

Pork producer (26/1/05)

Pork and beef producer (18/1/05)

Pork and lamb producer (19/1/05)

Pork, Poultry and Preserve producer (8/2/05)

Preserves producer (18/1/05)

Soap producer (20/1/05)

Vegetable producer (10/1/05)

Consumer interviews

Intermittent Durham attendee, buys for two (22/1/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for two (21/3/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for four (22/3/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for two (interview 30/6/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for two (4/7/05)

Durham attendee, buys for one (5/7/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for three (6/7/05)

Regular Durham attendee, buys for one (12/7/05)

Intermittent Durham attendee, buys for two (14/7/05)

Durham attendee, buys for one (18/8/05)

Regular Hexham attendees, a couple, who buy for two (7/6/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for two (28/6/05)

Regular Hexham attendees, a couple, who buy for two (30/6/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for four (30/6/05)

Regular Hexham, Newcastle and Durham attendees, a couple, who buy for two (1/7/05)

Hexham attendee buys for two (6/7/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for two (7/7/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for two (8/7/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for four (13/7/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for two (14/7/05)

Regular Hexham attendee, buys for two (18/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for one (27/6/05)

Intermittent Newcastle attendee, buys for two (27/6/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for two (27/6/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for two (28/6/05)

Intermittent Newcastle attendee, buys for one (28/6/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for one, occasionally two (29/6/05)

Two regular Newcastle attendees, one buys for two and the other for three (1/7/05)

Newcastle attendee, buys for two (5/7/05)

Newcastle attendee, buys for two (5/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for five (8/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for two (8/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendees, a couple, who buy for two (11/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for one (12/7/05)

Newcastle attendee, buys for one (12/7/05)

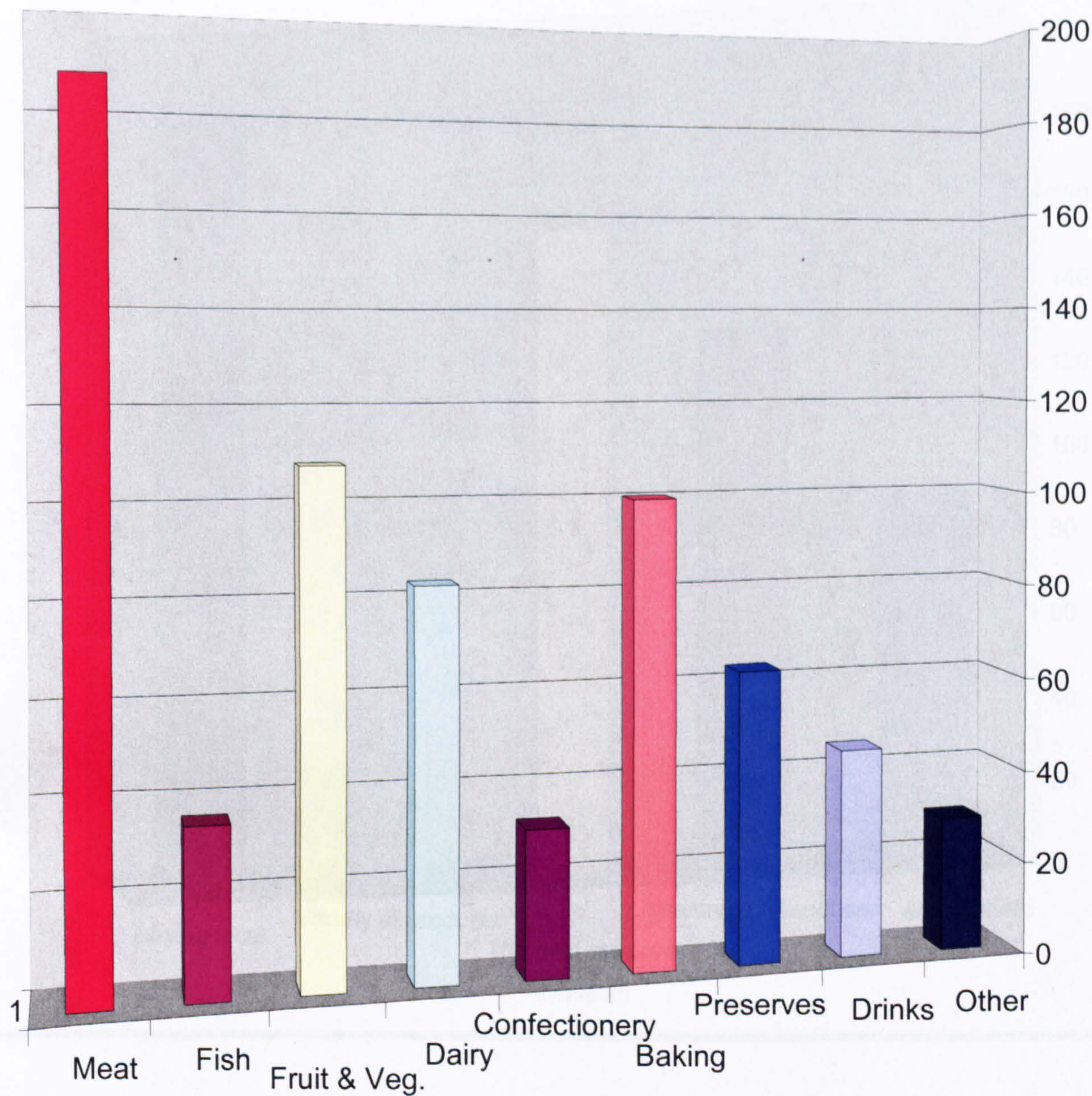
Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for one (13/7/05)

Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for five (20/7/05)

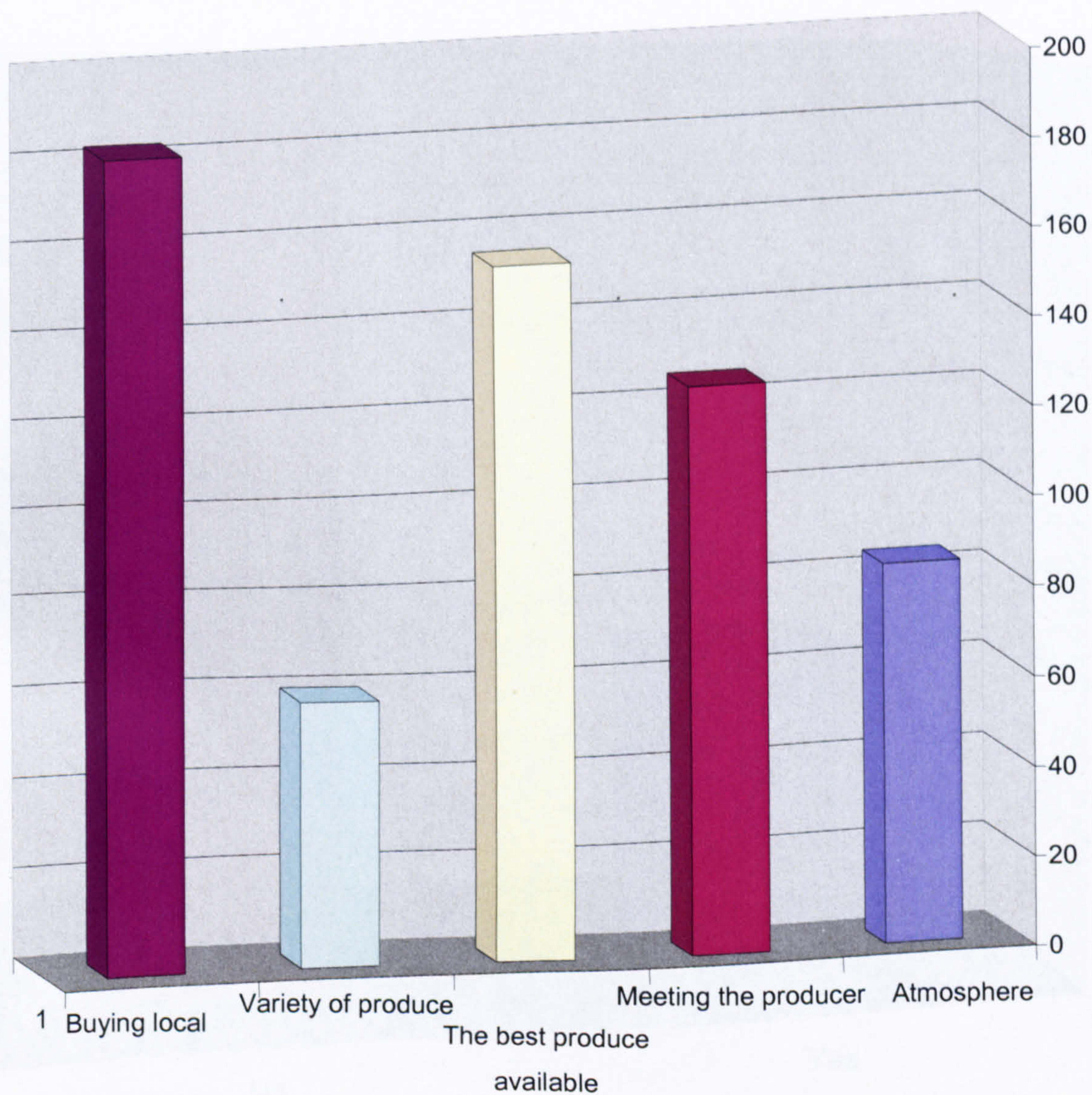
Regular Newcastle attendee, buys for two (29/7/05)

Questions and responses from market stall survey

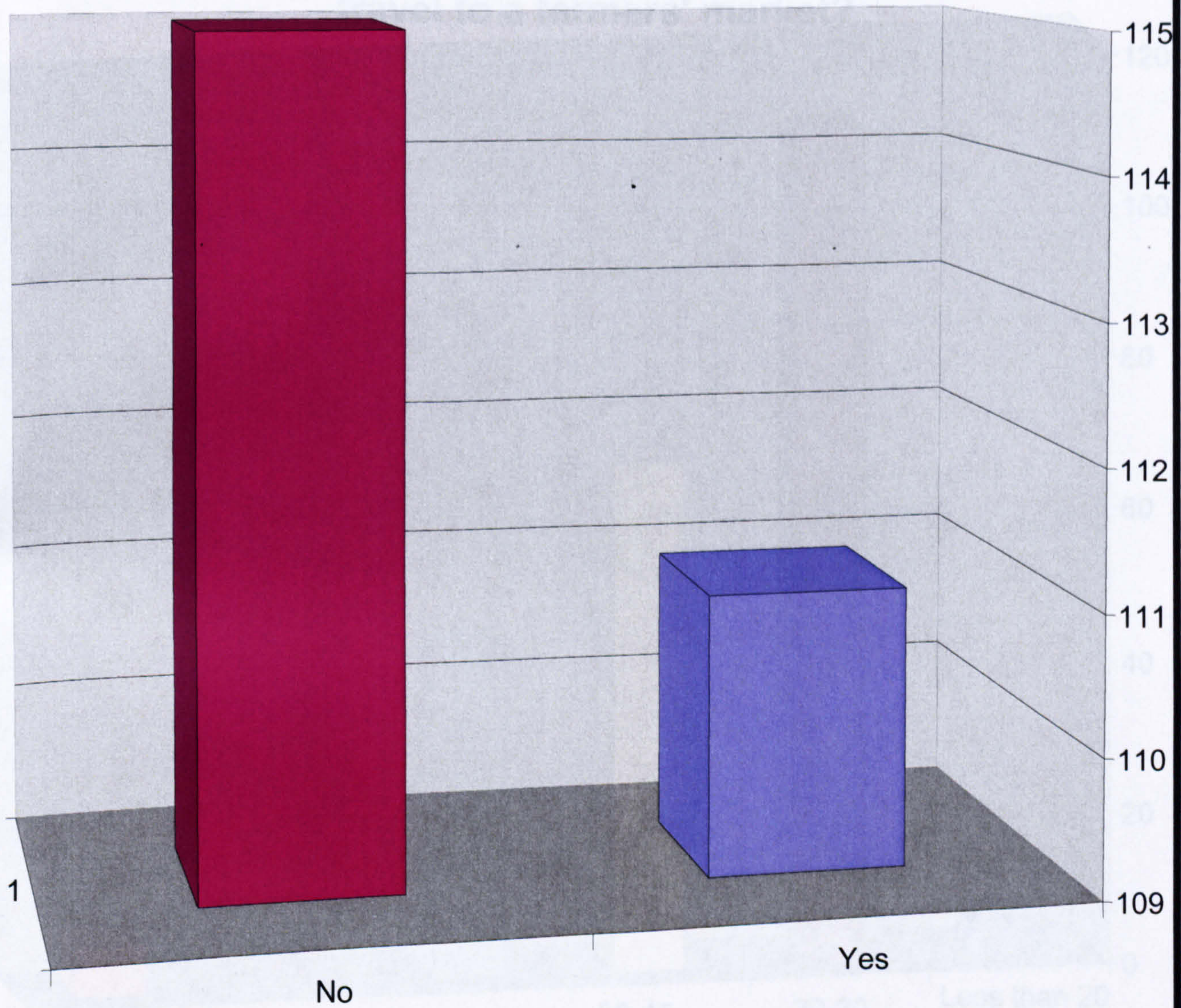
What Product do you typically buy at a farmers' market?



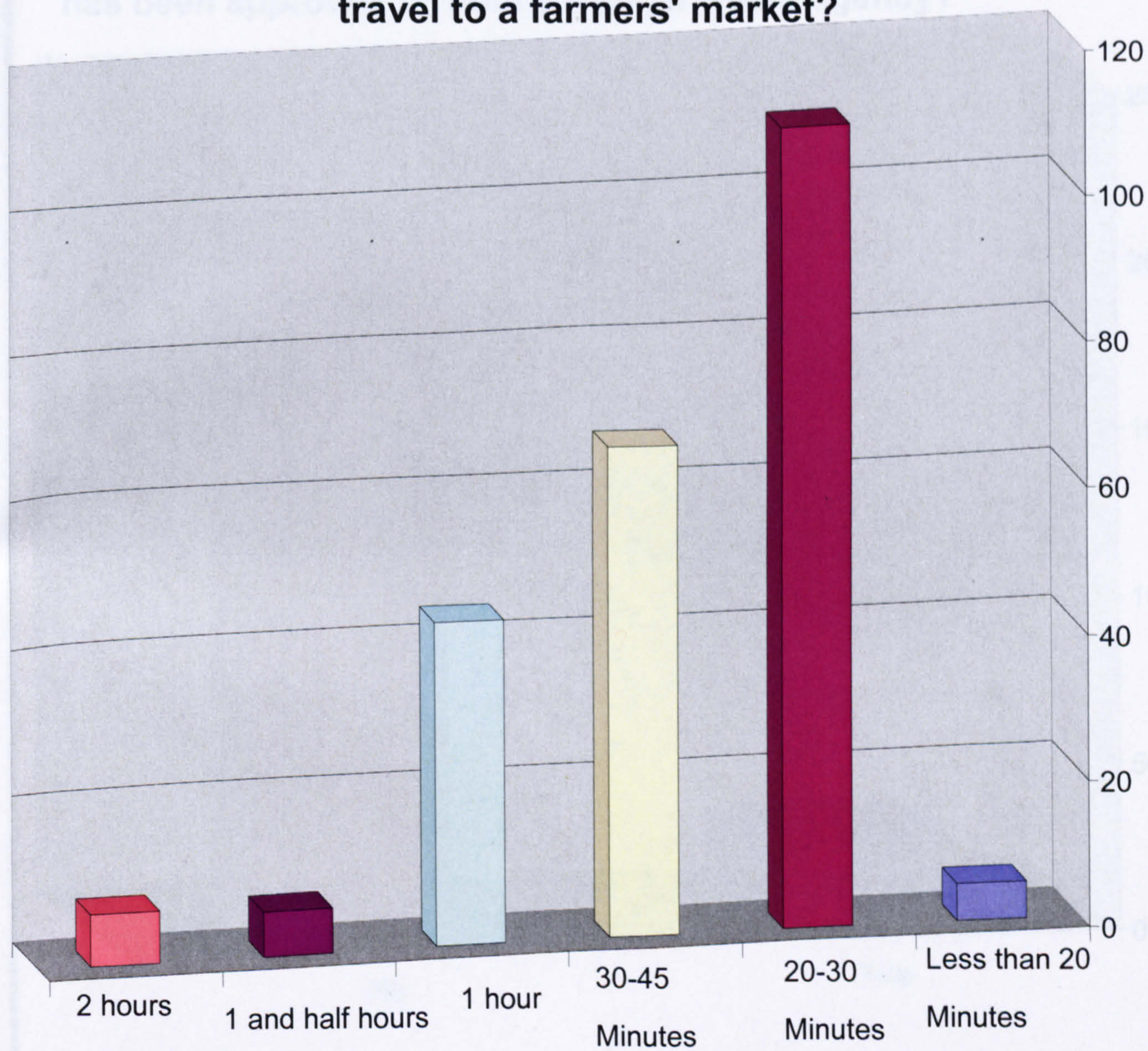
What do you like about shopping at a farmers' market?



Do you shop at any other farmers' markets?



In minutes, what is the maximum distance you would travel to a farmers' market?



Would your shopping be affected by whether the farmers' market has been approved or not by a government agency?

